



■ World / A8

UN to send
peacekeeping
force to Haiti

■ Lifestyle / D1

ABC
of vitamins



■ Sports/ A21

Tiger puts Love
away with
hot putter



■ Tanong ng Bayan / A20

Meron nga bang
"religious vote"?



■ Business/ B1

LexMedia launches
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Search continues for 18 RP seamen

PORTSMOUTH, Virginia—The US Coast Guard on Monday prepared to return to the site where a tanker carrying 13.3 million liters of ethanol exploded to determine whether to continue searching for 18 missing Filipino seamen.

The Coast Guard suspended its search on the frigid Atlantic at nightfall Sunday—nearly
SEARCH/ A16

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph



Tuesday, March 2, 2004 ★★ 44 pages / 4 sections / vol. 19 / no. 85

P18

website: www.inq7.net

Strike cripples transport; GMA orders sanctions

By PDI Bureaus
and Juliet Labog-Javellana

JEEPNEY drivers yesterday went on strike, stranding thousands of commuters in Metro Manila and other major cities and towns, to press their demands for a fare increase and the scrapping of legislation that gives oil com-
STRIKE/ A4

Abu names ship bomber

No proof
of terror
attack, say
probers

By Arlyn de la Cruz, Contributor
and Leila B. Salaverria, Metro

INSISTING that it was behind the SuperFerry 14 disaster, the Abu Sayyaf yesterday released the name of a member who it claimed had detonated the bomb that sparked the fire which gutted the passenger ship on Manila Bay last week.

Khadaffi Janjalani, chief of the terrorist group, identified the "suicide bomber" as Arnulfo Alvarado whose real name, he said, was Abu Muadz, a native of Pata Island in Sulu.

Khadaffi said Muadz was Passenger 51 of SuperFerry 14, which caught fire off Corregidor Island, killing one person and leaving 134 others missing.

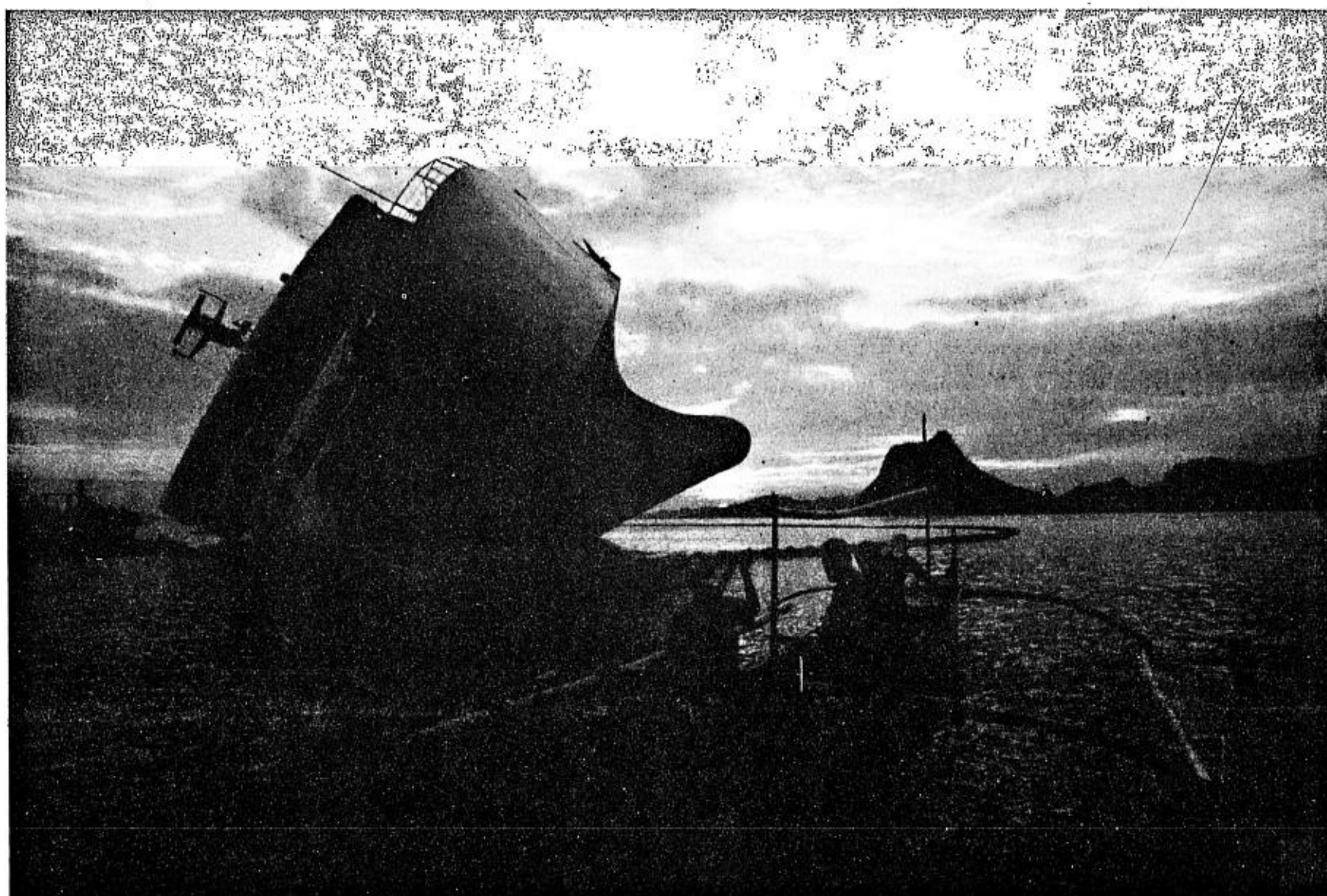
The Philippine Coast Guard yesterday confirmed that a certain Arnulfo Alvarado was on the passenger manifest of the ship. Data released by the PCG showed that Alvarado was 33 years old and was bound for Bacolod. His ticket number was 24633972.

The government yesterday maintained that there was no evidence to link the Abu Sayyaf to the explosion in the 10,192-ton steel-hulled ferry. The Abu Sayyaf, which is on the US list of terrorist groups, is known for kidnappings, murders, bombings and banditry.

Military spokesperson Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero said Navy frogmen, who searched the cabins of the gutted vessel, failed to find any pieces of "twisted metal," which he said usually indicated a blast triggered by explosives.

Lucero said "none of the in-

ABU NAMES/ A16



LONG night in search of life for Coast Guard personnel aboard tugboats by the burned wreckage of SuperFerry 14 near the shore of Mariveles, Bataan.

134 still missing; survivors found billeted in hotel

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE NUMBER of missing passengers and crew members of the gutted SuperFerry 14 yesterday dropped to 134 from 142 after the owner of the ship learned that some of the survivors had been unable to report to authorities, according to the Philippine Coast Guard.

Lt. Armand Balilo, PCG

spokesperson, said some of the survivors were found billeted at the Bayview Hotel on Roxas Boulevard in Manila.

A total of 757 people were rescued Friday while one passenger was confirmed dead when the ship caught fire following a loud explosion. The ship's owners on Sunday estimated the number of missing at 186, but yesterday they said

they were following the PCG's numbers.

The 10,192-ton vessel, owned by Aboitiz Transport System Corp., is now lying on its side at Sisiman in Mariveles, Bataan, at the mouth of Manila Bay.

Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza has ordered the creation of a 10-member special board of marine inquiry to investigate the disaster.

The board is chaired by Rear Adm. Danilo Abinoja from the PCG, with Capt. Jovito Tamayo from the Maritime Industry Authority as vice chair, and Commodore Benjamin Mata from the PCG Auxiliary, Capt. Ibarra Garcia from the Philippine Ports Authority, Captains Gregorio Salsas, Simeon Balita and Demetrio Ferrer, who are all master mariners; chief engineers Rodolfo Lagat and Diosdado Ramos, and Lt. Comman-

der Ramon Reblora from the PCG as members.

As of 3 p.m. yesterday, PCG divers had inspected 70 percent of the ship, but they had yet to come across the body of a passenger or crew member.

PCG chief Vice Adm. Arthur Gosingan said debris inside the ship, especially on the A-deck or tourist and cabin sections, ham-

134 STILL MISSING/ A16



A DOUBLE for Peter Jackson for best director and best picture.

'Return of the King' sweeps Oscars



WINNING LINE: (From left) Charlize Theron, best actress; Sean Penn, best actor; Renee Zellweger, best supporting actress, and Tim Robbins, best supporting actor.

LOS ANGELES—The epic journey of a raggedy gang of humans, hobbits, wizards, dwarves and elves hoisted the fantasy genre to Oscar glory as "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" won a record-tying 11 Oscars, sweeping every category in which it was nominated, including best picture.

The best director award went to Peter Jackson, overlord of arguably the biggest undertaking in cinema history, the simultaneous filming of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth trilogy: "The Fellowship of the Ring," "The Two Towers" and "The Return of the King."

"I'm so honored and relieved that the academy and the members of the academy that have sup-

'RETURN/ A17



Oscar losers
get \$110,000
worth of gifts

HOLLYWOOD—Even if they lose out on an award, this year's Oscar nominees won't go home empty-handed—they'll be showered with tens of thousands of dollars worth of gifts just for showing up.

Each of the giant troupe of nominees, presenters and performers at Sunday's 76th annual Academy Awards ceremony will receive a treasure trove of gifts to make their evening worthwhile.

While most details of this
OSCAR/ A17

Vizconde triumph over tragedy has just begun

By Volt Contreras

THIRTEEN years after the tragic murder of his family, Lauro Vizconde, 64, has finally repainted his house—from pale green to gleaming ivory.

And like the house that witnessed his darkest hour—the massacre of his wife and two daughters—his life has taken on a

brighter hue. Mang Lauro has even found romance.

He spoke briefly about a "girlfriend" and his aborted "plan to get married last year."

"Unfortunately, for some reason, I changed my mind (about the wedding). My girlfriend understood. I still see her once in a while," Vizconde said when the INQUIRER paid him a visit two

weeks ago at his now infamous bungalow on Vinzons Street, BF Homes in Parañaque City.

"I have lost my inspiration, but life must go on," he said as he straightened the portraits of his slain wife Estrellita, then 49, and daughters Ma. Carmela, then 19, and Anna Marie Jennifer, then 7.

The former businessman ap-

pears to have recovered financially. A commerce graduate, he has been working as a consultant on bookkeeping and tax matters to small companies for some years now. He was into garments manufacturing, taxi operation and catering until the '80s. He was managing a restaurant he put up with a cousin in South Carolina, USA,

when his family was murdered on June 30, 1991.

And after all these years, it's still not over. The Supreme Court has yet to rule on the appeal of the seven men convicted four years ago by the Parañaque City court which heard the celebrated case. The appellants are led by Hubert Webb, son of for-

VIZCONDE'S/ A18

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy to at times cloudy with isolated rainshowers.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: CHONA GALANG, PDI RESEARCH/03/02/04

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Second FRONT PAGE

Metro Manila Partly Cloudy
Baguio Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao Partly Cloudy
Laos Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay Partly Cloudy
Legaspi Partly Cloudy
Cagayan Partly Cloudy

Iloilo/Bacolod Partly Cloudy
Roxas Partly Cloudy
Cebu Partly Cloudy
Tacloban Cloudy with Rains
Gen. Santos Cloudy with Rains
Zamboanga Cloudy with Rains
Cagayan de Oro Cloudy with Rains
Davao Cloudy with Rains

Villar: NP eyeing to adopt Lacson

By Norman Bordadora

HIS 'independent' days may soon be over.

Yesterday, administration Sen. Manuel Villar said the directorate of the Nacionalista Party (NP), which he heads, would soon be meeting to discuss the possible adoption of presidential aspirant Sen. Panfilo Lacson as its candidate in the May elections. The NP is the country's oldest political party.

Last week, the Supreme Court declared Lacson without a party after it decided that actor Fernando Poe Jr. is the official candidate of the opposition Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino. With the NP endorsement, Lacson would no longer run as an independent.

Villar joined the party, with wife Rep. Cynthia Aguilar-Villar and Mayor Nene Aguilar, that welcomed Lacson in his Las Piñas City campaign swing yesterday, wearing a red shirt he said were "Ping colors." Ping is Lacson's nickname.

Lacson is a friend of the Vil-



SEN. Manny Villar and wife, Rep. Cynthia Aguilar-Villar, flank family friend presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson at a restaurant in Las Piñas Monday.

JESS YUSON

lar and Aguilar families, and once led the rescue of Cynthia's brother Christian from his abductors in 1996 when the senator was still head of

Task Force Habagat of the Presidential Anti-Crime Commission.

In Batangas province last week, Gov. Hermilando Man-

danas of the Liberal Party also indicated his support for Lacson, although his party is a member of the administration coalition K-4.

GMA accused of using gov't funds in campaign

By Norman Bordadora

FERTILIZER subsidies from government for non-existent farmlands and medicines for "ghost" patients.

That could be enough for presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson to bring President Macapagal-Arroyo to court for plunder as he said yesterday that he is now collating evidence to prove his accusation that the government has been diverting billions in agriculture and health funds to the offices of administration congressmen and mayors.

"We'll take this matter directly to the Filipino people first rather than go through the tedious process of going to the Office of the Ombudsman and the Commission on Elections," Lacson told reporters covering his southern Metro Manila sortie yesterday.

"At P10 million per mayor and congressman, that's billions in government money. That's plunder," Lacson said. Asked if he would pursue charges in the courts once his office has collated the evidence, he

replied: "Definitely."

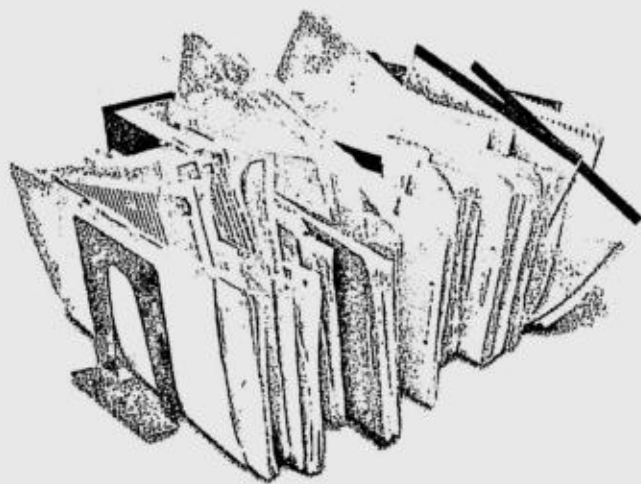
The senator, who is running on an anti-corruption platform, revealed that he has received reports that at least P10 million each has been distributed to administration congressmen and mayors, for ghost deliveries of medicines and fertilizers.

"In Quezon City (for instance), a congresswoman allegedly received funds for fertilizers. How can that be when there are no farmlands in Quezon City?" Lacson said, without mentioning any names.

There are two congresswomen in the city, Maite Defensor of the third district and Nanette Castelo-Daza of the fourth district. Both are members of the Lakas-CMD, the administration party. Defensor is the sister of presidential campaign spokesperson Michael Defensor.

The Lacson camp had earlier accused the administration of distributing thousands of pesos to mayors in areas reached by the President's campaign sorties, with as much as P20,000 each reportedly given to barangay chairpersons.

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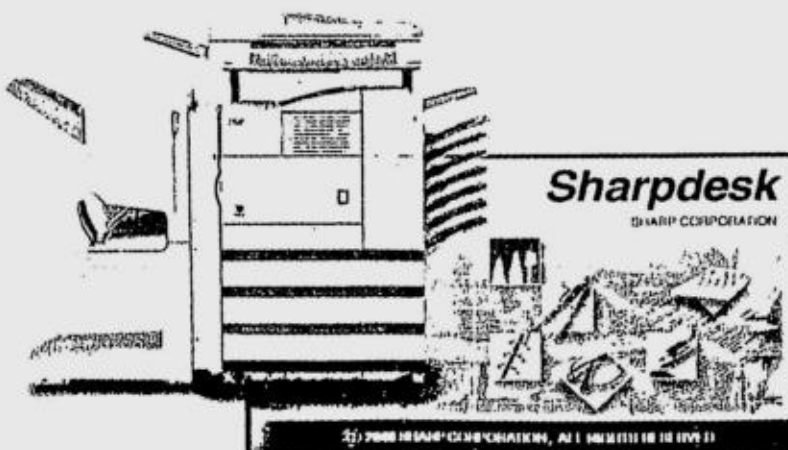
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Poe, Roco ahead in Ibon's survey

By Christian V. Esguerra

IN THE third presidential survey to come out in as many weeks, President Macapagal-Arroyo has dropped to third place behind opposition candidate Fernando Poe Jr. and former Sen. Raul Roco.

The latest survey, conducted by the independent Ibon Foundation Inc., showed Ms Macapagal trailing Poe by 14 percentage points. Poe got 30.04 percent of the votes of 1,315 respondents to the President's 16.05 percent, in the nationwide survey conducted on Feb. 7-15.

Roco, the candidate of the Alyansa ng Pag-Asa, was in second place with 19.39 percent.

The survey had a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level.

Ms Macapagal's 16.05 percent rating was an improvement over the 10.5 percent she garnered in Ibon's December survey.

Earlier in Pulse Asia's January-February survey, the President came in first, leading Poe by only 0.2 percent.

A subsequent survey by the Social Weather Stations that was commissioned by the opposition showed Poe getting 37.5 percent of the votes over Ms Macapagal's 28.7 percent, in the period from Jan. 28 to Feb. 6.

Asked if Ibon might not be accused of favoring a certain candidate with its latest findings, research director Antonio Tujan Jr. said: "We don't talk to any of the candidates, none of us is related to any of them."

The remark was in obvious reference to the known fact that the SWS is headed by Mahar Mangahas, a first cousin of Poe's.

Two factors were working in favor of Ms Macapagal in the latest

Ibon survey, according to Tujan.

First, he said, at least 22 percent of the respondents were undecided on whom to vote for for president, a situation that could favor Ms Macapagal or Roco depending on how well they do in the campaign.

Tujan warned that Poe, far from being complacent, should be wary of falling in the rankings should there be the "widespread perception among the masses that he is undesirable."

The second factor working for Ms Macapagal, Tujan said, was the substantial improvement in her satisfaction rating.

Of the 1,315 respondents, 19.54 percent said they were satisfied with the way she was doing her job, an improvement of eight percentage points over her 11.1 percent job satisfaction rating in Ibon's December survey.

The number of respondents not happy with the President's performance also dropped from 70.74 percent in December to 61.52 percent in the latest survey. At least 18 percent of the respondents said they did not know when asked if they were satisfied with the President's work.

In contrast, Roco and Sen. Panfilo Lacson saw their ratings drop in the latest Ibon survey.

Roco's 19.39 percent was three points lower than the 22.46 percent he received in the December survey. Lacson, who got 7.68 percent this time around to place fourth in the rankings, received 10.5 percent of the votes in the previous survey.

In the vice presidential race, the administration's Sen. Noli de Castro pulled ahead of opposition candidate Sen. Loren Legarda, garnering 37.41 percent of the votes to Legarda's 30.8 percent.

"It's still up for grabs," he said.

Samar solon's guard shot

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—Unidentified armed men shot and wounded a bodyguard of Samar Rep. Reynaldo Uy yesterday morning in Calbayog City, Samar, two days after the assassination of Tarangan Mayor Aniceto Olaje, a supporter of the legislator's archrival.

SPO3 Edgardo Aniban, 35, was shot by two men in Barangay Hamurawon, Calbayog, at about 7:45 a.m. while he was driving a motorcycle. Aniban's wife, Belen, whom he was taking to her work at the Calbayog City Hall, rode on the passenger seat.

The suspects, described as in their early 20s, fled on foot after the shooting.

The policeman sustained bullet wounds in different parts of his body. He was brought by helping hands to the Calbayog General Hospital but later transferred to the Camillos Hospital where doctors declared his condition as stable.

Police recovered .45-caliber pistol shells from the crime scene.

Authorities did not see any link between the shooting of Aniban and the killing of Olaje over the weekend.

But Uy told the INQUIRER, "The other camp was responsible in this incident. They wanted to get back at me."

Uy was referring to the camp of former Samar Rep. Rodolfo Tuzon, his opponent for a congressional seat in Samar's first district. Uy himself is seeking a second term under the Liberal Party.



VETERAN actor Eddie Garcia entertains fans during a campaign rally of the Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino in Legazpi City on Sunday. At right is KNP standard-bearer Fernando Poe Jr.

'PERSONAL EMERGENCY'

Poe abruptly cuts short Bicol campaign swing

By Christine O. Avendaño

LEGAZPI CITY—Opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. yesterday abruptly cut short his campaign swing through the Bicol region to rush back to Manila and attend to a "personal emergency."

Poe took a helicopter back to Manila at 5 a.m. on Monday after receiving a phone call at around 2 a.m., his campaign manager Sen. Vicente Sotto III told reporters hoping to interview the actor at the Alicia Hotel here at 6 a.m.

Poe's abrupt departure came amid rumors the Supreme Court was ready to release its ruling on his disqualification case, which hinges on whether the 64-year-old candidate is a natural-born Filipino citizen.

Sotto said he did not know what the emergency was. "Nagulat din ako (I too was surprised.)," he told the media.

Poe's camp said that even with their standard-bearer's departure, the three Koalisyon ng Nagkakaisang Pilipino (KNP) rallies scheduled yesterday in Virac, Catanduanes; Bulan, Sorsogon, and Sorsogon City would push through.

Poe's spokesperson, Rep. Francis Escudero, said there was a chance the presidential candidate would make back in time for the last rally in Sorsogon City.

Poe "apologized" to the party for his abrupt departure, according to Escudero, and said he "would try to make it for the evening rally."

"He (Poe) tasked Eddie Garcia to tell his supporters in Catanduanes and Bulan (of this development)," Escudero added.

Asked if Poe's departure was connected to rumors the Supreme Court was coming out today with its ruling in the disqualification case, Escudero said he doubted it.

Sotto was optimistic the high court would rule in Poe's favor and affirm that the actor was a natural-born Filipino citizen, the bone of contention in his candidacy.

"I am very confident the Supreme Court

will follow the law," Sotto said. "There is no way FPJ is not a Filipino."

Asked about the reported threat of groups like the People's Movement Against Poverty, which is identified with Poe's close friend deposed President Joseph Estrada, to mount protests in the event Poe is disqualified, Sotto said the KNP "doesn't talk to other organizations and we do not have anything to do with any (protest) plans."

Despite the presence of comedy king Dolphy, organizers admitted that the turnout at the rally held at the back of the LCC mall here Sunday night was small compared to other rallies in other KNP sorties.

Sen. Gringo Honasan, who is in charge of security in Poe's campaign, said the rally was a "minor" one.

"The crowd last night was small compared to the people that have lined up the streets in Bulacan, Pangasinan, Bataan, Nueva Vizcaya, Cagayan and Isabela," Honasan told reporters. He attributed the low turnout to lack of publicity.

Honasan, a Bicolano, also denied that the reception to Poe's presence was "lukewarm" and said the better term was "subdued." He said this was the nature of Bicolanos.

This was echoed by actor Eddie Garcia, a constant presence in Poe's campaign sorties and a Bicolano himself. "That's the temperament of the Bicolanos. They are reserved," said Garcia.

Sotto said that while the KNP was "pleased" with its campaign sortie in Bicol, "this is the only place where there were three (instances) where I saw an individual not (flashing) the hand signal of FPJ."

Aside from Dolphy, the rally livened up when movie and television star Judy Ann Santos made an appearance to endorse senatorial candidate Jamby Madrigal as well as Poe and the rest of the KNP slate.

The crowd also cheered when Poe's friends and fellow actors Garcia and Eddie Gutierrez made their appearances to endorse him.

3 colonels transferred amid security concerns

THREE military colonels have been reassigned on suspicion they were recruiting soldiers to support anti-government protests, stirring concerns about restiveness in the military ahead of the May national elections.

Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff Gen. Narciso Abaya said in an interview that the three officers were transferred to Mindanao from Manila following reports they planned to rally troops behind supporters of Fernando Poe Jr. if the movie star was disqualified from the presidential race.

The Supreme Court is expected to decide this week whether Poe is a natural-born Filipino citizen and thus eligible to run for president.

"They (three colonels) were holding meetings," Abaya said. "These meetings were supposed to be the recruitment of some individuals who would do some mass actions in case of disqualification."

Questions over Poe's ability to govern should he win the May 10 polls have ramped up political uncertainty and fears of violence in the country.

An aborted coup by disgruntled junior military officers last July was the latest in a string

of military uprisings to plague the country since the overthrow of strongman Ferdinand Marcos in 1986.

Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita warned last week that some military officers, possibly the same group that had orchestrated the failed July mutiny, were attempting to recruit soldiers for fresh attempts to destabilize the government.

Abaya said the latest recruitment efforts had targeted members of the military's reserve force, which forms the bulk of the Armed Forces' officer corps.

"We are watching them, and they know that for sure," Abaya said, adding that the 113,000-strong military would remain neutral in the May elections.

"Our own duty is to vote and make sure the exercise is fair and clean," he said.

Abaya said the communist New People's Army still posed the most serious security problem in the elections.

He said the NPA, which has about 9,000 armed guerrillas spread throughout the country, had stepped up its recruitment and fund-raising in an attempt to take advantage of the polls. *Reuters*

Most of NPC backing GMA, says solon

MOST members of the Nationalist People's Coalition will back President Macapagal-Arroyo in the May presidential election despite earlier declarations by some to support her chief rival, Fernando Poe Jr., Eastern Samar Rep. Marcelino Libanan said yesterday.

Libanan admitted that the presidential race has narrowed down to a fight between Ms Macapagal and Poe.

He said most of the 58 NPC congressmen will go for Ms Macapagal despite close ties between Poe and NPC founder Eduardo

"Danding" Cojuangco.

He cited Representatives Gerry Espina (Biliran), Eduardo Veloso (Leyte), Douglas Cagas (Davao del Sur) and Juan Pablo Bondoc (Pampanga) as some of the NPC stalwarts who will support the President.

Last December, he said, a group of 25 NPC members led by Negros Occidental Rep. Alfredo Maranon expressed support for the President.

"We respect Fernando Poe Jr. for his achievements in the movie industry, but we have to think about the welfare of our people," he said. *Cynthia D. Balana*

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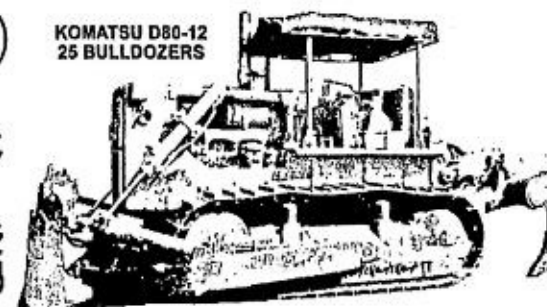
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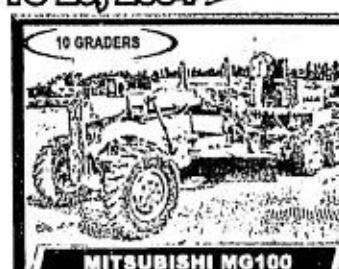
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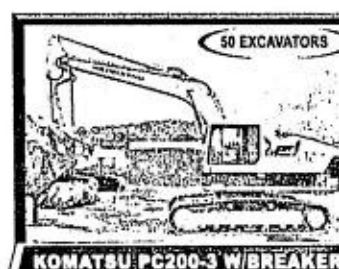
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Strike cripples transport; GMA orders sanctions

From page A1

panies leeway to increase fuel prices.

At least 17 strikers were arrested in Quezon City, Caloocan City and Malabon for allegedly preventing other drivers from plying their routes or blocking the main roads, police said.

Organizers claimed that 95-99 percent of public transport in Metro Manila and the provinces was paralyzed, but the Philippine National Police said this was not so. "The goal was to totally paralyze transportation, but the transport groups apparently failed," Director Ricardo de Leon, National Capital Region Police Office chief, said.

Angelito Vergel de Dios, head of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority's traffic division, said about 30 percent of services were affected.

Thousands of students and workers had to walk to work or school. Some schools suspended classes.

Invoking the general welfare, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday threatened jeepney and transport groups with the revocation of their franchises to operate.

"I have ordered the DOTC (Department of Transportation and Communications) to cancel the franchises of jeepney operators who violate the law," Ms Macapagal said in a statement shortly before noon.

Her spokesperson, Ignacio Bunye, said the President's announcement should deter other transport groups from joining the strike. But the warning was issued hours after the jeepney strike had begun in earnest, paralyzing key transport routes and forcing the suspension of classes in Metro Manila.

The strike was led by the Pinag-isang Samahan ng mga TsUPER at Operators Nationwide (Piston), the Samahan ng mga TsUPER at Operator ng Pilipinas (STOP), and the Philippine Confederation of Drivers and Operators-Alliance of Concerned Transport Organizations (PCDO-Acto). The Land Transportation,

Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) yesterday said those who joined the strike violated the Public Service Act. Their franchises and licenses would be suspended for at least 30 days, said LTFRB Chair Maria Elena Bautista.

Santiago Manalili, STOP-Pampanga spokesperson, said Bautista's warning would make many striking drivers in key areas in the country "colorum (holders of illegal franchises)."

Bautista said the board was open to a P1 provisional increase the jeepney groups were demanding, but she added that a rollback scheme should be in place in case the permanent increase would be lower. Minimum jeepney fare is P4.

The groups are asking LTFRB for a P1-P2 increase in fares for the first 5 km, and oil companies to reduce the price of diesel to P12.60 per liter. They are also seeking the resignation of Bautista.

Metro Manila

In Metro Manila, the protest action was generally peaceful except for complaints that some members of militant and transport groups had harassed drivers who did not join them.

At least 17 strikers, mostly members of Piston, were arrested for trying to prevent other drivers from plying their routes by allegedly threatening them or blocking the main roads, the National Capital Region Police Office reported.

On Kamias and Kalayaan Avenues in Quezon City, members of the Central Police District arrested Sonny Bernardo, Roberto Pansakala, Jovito Polmon, Carlos Comora, Gerardo Evangelista, Gregorio Danila, Ireneo Perecho, Peter Puenteblanca, Ronald Melchor, Gilbert Cruz, Tess Lopez, May Reyes and Joseph Parayo.

In Caloocan City, Roland Reyes and Rafael Wesbello were held for allegedly threatening other drivers, while Eduardo Jacobi was allegedly caught scattering metal spikes on Letre Road in Malabon.

The strike affected the Cubao-Divisoria, Cubao-España, Marikina, Alabang, Manila and other routes in the Camanava (Caloocan-Malabon-Navotas-Vallenzuela) area, as well as jeepney routes in Pasig City, Quiapo in Manila, San Juan, Marikina City and Quezon City.

Both the NCRPO-Traffic Management Group and the MMDA deployed buses, trucks and shuttle vehicles, offering free rides to stranded commuters. Provincial buses were also given special permits to ferry commuters.

Luzon

More than 500,000 striking drivers in 24 provinces and cities in six regions in Luzon ignored the government's warning on the suspension or cancellation of their franchises, crippling by 99 percent the transport routes there, Tom Talavera of STOP said.

Talavera claimed the strike was "99 percent successful" in Bataan, Zambales, Pampanga, Tarlac, Nueva Ecija and Bulacan in Central Luzon; Laguna, Lucena City in Quezon, Cavite and Batangas in Southern Tagalog; Pangasinan in Northern Luzon; Legazpi and Naga cities and Camarines Sur in Bicol; Davao and Cagayan de Oro cities in Mindanao; and San Juan, Marikina, Pasig, Baguio and Alabang in Metro Manila.

Central Luzon police officials reported that transportation was 80 percent paralyzed in Tarlac as of 7 a.m. and 100 percent grounded in Bulacan as of 6 a.m.

In Pampanga, drivers stopped plying the routes in the cities of Angeles and San Fernando and in the towns of Magalang, Mexico and Arayat.

Bataan was affected but the Morong-Subic Bay Freeport route was normal. Transport in Aurora, northeast of Central Luzon, was not affected.

In Zambales, police said only the Castillejos and Botolan routes to Olongapo City were halted.

The Bulacan Confederation of

Operators and Drivers Association, the provincial chapter of Piston, said in a statement it was the one which led the protest of drivers in Bulacan.

At least five out of 55 associations of drivers in Pampanga did not join the protest after their leaders on Friday met with police and LTFRB officials who promised to schedule a dialogue on March 15.

In Bataan, business activities at the town's export zone were not totally disrupted although many workers failed to make it to the office.

The provincial government of Bataan deployed 26 vehicles, mostly trucks to ferry stranded commuters from Manila, Pampanga, Bulacan and Olongapo City.

In Nueva Ecija, Baliwag Transit Bus Co. stopped servicing the Cabanatuan City to Tarlac City route but trips to other towns and cities in the province, including its trip to Metro Manila, continued, said company dispatcher Perfecto Talampas.

In Olongapo City, classes were suspended Monday after the strike that paralyzed 90 percent of the city's transportation system. Hundreds of commuters were stranded.

Among the transport federations in the city and nearby areas that joined the strike were the Bukluran ng mga Progresibong TsUPER at Operator (Bumper)-Central Luzon and the Olongapo-Zambales Public Utility Transport Federation.

Although officials of the Olongapo Subic Castillejos Transport Service Cooperative Inc. (OSCTSCI) had discouraged their members to join the strike, 4,000 jeepney and bus drivers in Olongapo City and Zambales joined the strike.

In Dagupan City, thousands of tricycles ruled the roads as 16 jeepney associations plying Dagupan to different towns joined the strike.

Commuters, mostly students and employees, had no choice but to pay whatever amount the tricycle drivers had demanded—a minimum of P20 each passenger from the usual P5.

While there were no jeepneys

on major roads, there was heavy traffic because of the tricycles that were allowed to ply the routes.

Truck owners and drivers also took advantage of the situation and ferried passengers to Dagupan.

In Baguio City, traffic was unhindered contrary to television reports after jeepney operators and drivers postponed their strike until Wednesday.

Visayas

Classes were suspended in most private schools in Negros Occidental and in Cebu when drivers went on strike to demand a P1.50 increase in fares.

The strike crippled at least 90 percent of public transportation in Bacolod City and the rest of Negros Occidental.

But in Cebu, the mass action only affected the northern and southern Cebu areas. It failed to paralyze the public transport in Cebu City after Mayor Tomas Osmeña dangled incentives to non-striking drivers.

Osmeña declared a "traffic holiday" and gave drivers incentives, such as the condonation of traffic violations, permits to ply outside their routes, packed meals and PhilHealth cards.

In Negros Occidental, the United Negros Drivers Operators Center (Undoc) demanded a stop in the oil price increases, suspension of the oil deregulation law, and the scrapping of "all oppressive and onerous" taxes imposed on the transport sector.

Businesses remained opened, as taxis, some jeepneys and pedicabs continued to service commuters.

In Cebu, leaders of the Nagkahiusang Draybers sa Sugbo (Nadsu) claimed that they were able to paralyze 95 percent of public transport in northern Cebu, including Mandaue and Danao cities and Consolacion, Liloan and Carmen towns.

In southern Cebu, the strike affected Talisay City, and Minglanilla, Naga, San Fernando, Carcar and other towns.

Also joining Nadsu were the Visayas United Drivers and Transport Services Cooperative and the Cebu City Transport Service Cooperative.

Most private schools decided to suspend classes. Many businesses remained opened.

In Iloilo City, about 50 members of the Piston carried placards and streamers and held an hour-long rally at the Plazoletagay around noon.

Mindanao

In General Santos City, it was business as usual despite a protest action staged by groups led by the Transport Integrated Restructuring and Economic Services (TIREs), an affiliate of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan.

After staging a picket in front of Caltex and Petron depots in Barangay Bula at 8 a.m., the groups held a caravan around the city. Only about 20 tricycles joined them.

At 10 a.m., they converged at the public market where a two-hour "tigil-pasada" (transport stoppage) was held.

A similar two-hour stoppage was held in Davao City.

In Cotabato City, a half-day jeepney strike crippled transport activities, but the military quickly came to the rescue.

Army Maj. Gen. Generoso Senga, 6th Infantry Division chief, deployed four M-35 trucks to ferry stranded commuters, while Mayor Muslimin Sema fielded at least five government-owned vehicles. With reports from Tina Santos, Christian V. Esguerra and Clarissa S. Batino; Tonette Orejas, Allan Macatuno, Ansbet Joaquin, Greg Refraccion, Cesar Villa, Anselmo Roque and Carmela Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk, and Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes and Vincent Cabeza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau; Jhunnex Napallacan, Carla P. Gomez, Nestor P. Burgos Jr. and Jolene R. Bulambot, PDI Visayas Bureau; and Aquiles Z. Zonio and Edwin O. Fernandez, PDI Mindanao Bureau

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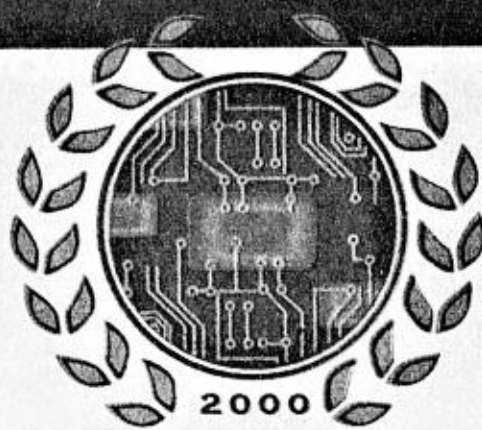
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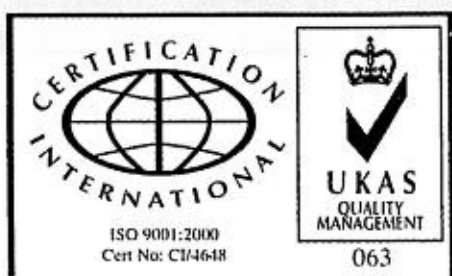
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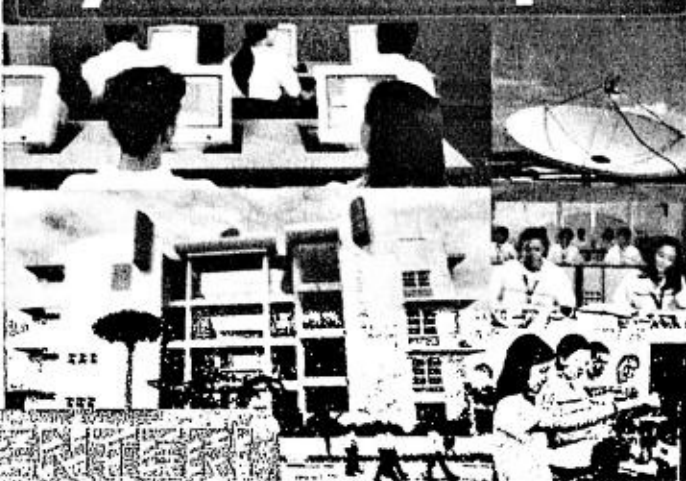
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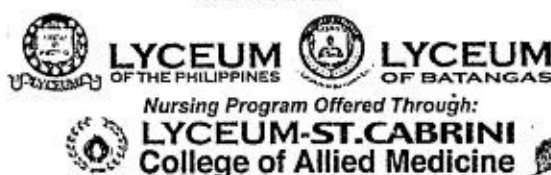


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Big oil firms cut prices of cooking gas

By Abigail L. Ho

OFFERING relief from rising commodity prices, the country's four

biggest oil firms Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., Caltex Philippines Inc., and Total (Philippines) Corp. brought down prices of their liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) by P16.50 per 11-kilogram cylinder.

The price of Petron's Gasul went down to between P300 and P310 and Shell's Shellane dropped to between P310 and P320 midnight last night, while that of Caltex's LPG was slashed by P1.50 per kilogram at 6 a.m. today.

Pryce Gas, the biggest supplier of LPG in the Visayas and Mindanao, also decreased its price by the same level effective midnight last night.

Total's TotalGaz, on the other hand, will decrease the price of its LPG by midnight tonight, bringing down its retail price to P295 per cylinder.

In a statement issued yesterday, Caltex said it was bringing down the price of its LPG be-

cause "international prices of LPG have softened in the past two weeks."

Shell general manager for external affairs Roberto Kanapi said in a telephone interview that international contract prices (ICP) for LPG usually go down around this time every year, following the surge in winter demand from countries like China and Japan.

Diesel prices, on the other hand, would remain at the P17.90 to P18 levels.

As for gasoline, Caltex explained that following the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' Feb. 10 decision to cut production by around 2.5 million barrels a day starting April 1, international gasoline prices soared by around \$6.50 per barrel.

"If this uptrend continues, and depending on market conditions, we may have to review price levels of our gasoline products in the near future," Caltex said.

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Gov't agents goof: Wrong Fajardo

By Alcuin Papa

OOPS.

Authorities yesterday admitted that the man they arrested over the weekend and tagged as one of the country's two most wanted kidnappers was not the suspect af-

ter all.

Lt. Gen. Alfonso Dagudag, Armed Forces of the Philippines Southern Luzon Command chief, told reporters the man closely resembled Rolando Fajardo, who is on the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (Naktf) most wanted list and has a P1-million price on his head.

Dagudag identified the man authorities arrested as a certain Pablo Calingasan. National Bureau of Investigation official Ruel Lasala said Calingasan was released after it was verified through his fingerprints that he was not Fajardo.

"He was merely invited for validation, and he was kept just for validation," said Lasala, chief of the NBI Reaction, Arrest and Interdiction Division (RAID) team which made the arrest along with Naktf operatives.

Fajardo and his brother Harold are the two most wanted kidnappers in the country today. Both have P1-million prices on their heads and their pictures appear on posters recently issued by Naktf.

Earlier, the authorities had boasted that they had collared Fajardo in San Pablo City, after he and his brother managed to elude authorities who raided their houses in Tanauan, Batangas on Thursday.

"We got the information based on field reports," Lucero said yesterday.

"He just looked very much like Fajardo," said Lasala. As to the mistaken arrest, "it happens in operations," he said.

With Tarra Quismundo

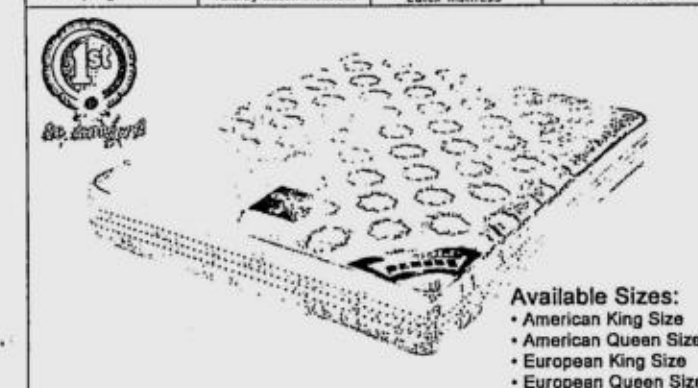
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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, March 2, 2004
1st Week of Lent

1st Reading: Is 55:10-11
Gospel: Mt 6:7-15

Jesus said to his disciples, "When you pray, do not use a lot of words, as the pagans do, for they hold that the more they say, the more chance they have of being heard. Do not be like them. Your Father knows what you need, even before you ask him.

This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, holy be your name, your kingdom come and your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts just as we have forgiven those who are in debt to us.

Do not bring us to the test but deliver us from the evil one. "If you forgive others their wrongs, your Father in heaven will also forgive yours. If you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive you either."

Commentary
St. Cyprian (c. 200-258) on the Our Father, "We do not say 'My Father, who art in heaven,' nor 'Give me this day my daily bread'; nor does each one ask that only his or her own debt should be forgiven... Our prayer is public and common; and when we pray we pray not for one but for the whole people, because we the whole people are one..."

"Hallowed be thy name": not that we wish God to be sanctified by our prayers, but that we ask to keep his name holy in us... "Thy Kingdom come": we beg that God's Kingdom be revealed to us. For when did God not reign? We pray for his coming in us. "Thy will be done on earth": God may do what he wishes, who can hinder him in that? But we pray that we may be able to fulfill his will in us... "Give us this day our daily bread": Christ is the bread of life; we are in Christ and receive the Eucharist daily as the food of salvation. We should seek only our food and keep. "Forgive us our trespasses": We have asked for food. Now we ask for forgiveness, so that we who are fed by God may be able to live in him. "Lead us not into temptation": The enemy can do nothing against us without God's permission... Praying [this petition] reminds us of our inconstancy and weakness. "Deliver us from evil": Having said that, there is nothing left to ask for... Who can fear this life, if God is his life-guardian?"

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Court junks 24 graft raps vs Kokoy

By Armand N. Nocom

THE SANDIGANBAYAN yesterday dismissed 24 graft charges filed against former Ambassador and Leyte Gov. Benjamin "Kokoy" Romualdez for his alleged "failure or refusal" to file a statement of assets and liabilities for 25 years allegedly to conceal his ill-gotten wealth.

In dismissing the case against the brother of former First Lady Imelda Marcos, the Sandiganbayan First Division cited the fact that the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission has no authority to file graft cases against Romualdez.

With its decision, the anti-graft court was only affirming and implementing the ruling of the Supreme Court which ruled on the matter on July 30, 2002.

"Considering that the decision of the Honorable Supreme Court in Benjamin 'Kokoy' Romualdez vs. The Honorable Sandiganbayan... ruled that herein information may be quashed because the officer who filed the same had no authority to do so; and that the said decision became final and executory on Nov. 29, 2002, these cases are considered dismissed," the Sandiganbayan said.

The PAGC has brought Romualdez to court for his "failure or refusal to file" his statement of assets and liabilities (SAL) during the 24 years that he served as Leyte provincial governor, starting in 1962 to 1985.

Although the PAGC filed the case on Feb. 27, 1989, it was stalled for more than a

Feminists give 'X-rating' to liquor ad

By Ma. Diosa Labiste
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Turned off by a liquor ad for its "sexual innuendos," members of a militant women's group here are arming themselves with paintbrushes and red paint to demonstrate their distaste for the "offensive" billboards and posters once they are put up in this city.

The Gabriela Women's Party-list (GWP) yesterday said they will paint an "X" on any poster or billboard of Napoleon Brandy carrying the advertisement blurb "Nakatikim ka na ba ng 15 anyos?" (Have you tried a 15-year-old?) They said the advertisement, also aired for radio audiences, makes allusions to sexual experiences with a 15-year-old virgin. The posters are yet to reach the province.

Rep. Liza Maza of the party-list Bayan Muna said they wrote an open letter to Oscar Valenzuela, executive director of the Advertising Board of the Philippines asking him to reprimand the advertising agency that produced the ad. Maza said the advertisement is "insensitive" to women and children. She said many women have reacted strongly against the commercial.

The GWP also urged the owners of the popular men's drink to pull out the advertisements from radio stations and dismantle billboards found in the Metro Manila area. At the same time, it also dared presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson to stop the airing and display of the advertisement. Lacson was a previous endorser of the brandy.

Lucy Francisco, a council member of GWP in Western Visayas, said their members will fan out to urban poor and fishing communities, where there is a big market for cheap alcoholic drinks to ward off the cold nights, to convince men to stop buying the product.

The campaign against the ad, sexism or discrimination or marginalization of sexes in media, and other women's issues are part of the strategy of GWP to win votes for the May elections. GWP an ally of the Bayan Muna party-list, is among several sectoral groups vying for seats in the House of Representatives.

Maza, also GWP president, said the campaign to stop violence against women and children is part of their Blow A Whistle campaign, where a whistle is used as a symbol to break the culture of silence on family violence.

decade because of the Philippine government's refusal to allow Romualdez and the Marcos family to return after they fled the country in 1986.

Upon his return on April 26, 2000, Romualdez immediately posted a P405,000 bail for his temporary liberty.

On June 2, 2000, Romualdez moved for the dismissal of the charges on the ground that the information was filed by the PCGG acting as "the complainant, the investigator and the judge."

When the Sandiganbayan denied his motion in a resolution dated June 8, 2000, Romualdez raised the issue before the Supreme Court.

With the high tribunal's ruling, only three graft cases against Romualdez remain pending before the Sandiganbayan.

In criminal case no. 13403, Romualdez is accused of receiving double compensation while serving two concurrent positions as Leyte governor and Philippine ambassador to the United States, China and Saudi Arabia between 1976 and 1986.

Two other cases involved alleged behest loans extended by former officials of the Development Bank of the Philippines to Romualdez in behalf of his publishing company, the now sequestered Philippine Journalists, Inc.

The release of \$1.745 million in 1976 and \$124,000 in 1978 were reportedly done despite the absence of a collateral and concurring signatures of other DBP directors.

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BANGKOK	175	175	308 630
MACAU	95	100	260 710
TOKYO	190	340	ABU DHABI 290 670
OSAKA	220	375	BAHRAIN 290 670
FUKUOKA	190	340	HONOLULU 330 630
NAGOYA	190	340	LOS ANGELES 350 660
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NARITA	190	340	NEW YORK 410 760
TAIPEI	140	285	TORONTO 415 810
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SEOUL	180	370	VANCOUVER 350 660
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RP deports 2 Yanks linked to al-Qaida

TWO American brothers arrested in the country last year for alleged ties to al-Qaida-linked groups were deported to the United States, immigration officials said yesterday.

Michael Ray Stubbs, 55, of Antioch, California, and his brother James, 56, who also goes by the name Jamil Daud Mujahid, of Newark, New Jersey, were arrested in December and ordered deported.

Authorities alleged that James Stubbs met with members of the Muslim extremist group Abu Sayyaf as well as the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

There was no evidence linking the men to any past or planned terrorist plots, officials said.

The brothers had entered the Philippines on tourist visas but also carried documents indicating they were soliciting funds to build Muslim schools and mosques, officials said.

Immigration Commissioner Alipio Fernandez Jr. said the brothers were deported on Saturday to Japan, where US marshals escorted them on a flight to the United States.

Relatives of the men confirmed they had returned to the San Francisco Bay area.

In December, FBI agents said they were investigating Michael Stubbs to



BROTHERS Michael Ray and James Stubbs were blacklisted by the government as "undesirable aliens and threats to national security." Photo taken on Dec. 30, 2003.

PDIPHOTO

determine if he had access to sensitive information while working in the 1990s as an air conditioning and heating technician at the US Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory.

According to Philippine military intelligence reports, James Stubbs left his job as a teacher in California to study Arabic in Sudan. He met last May with several charity groups suspected of being al-Qaida fronts founded by Mahmoud Afif Abdeljalil—believed to be a close associate of Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law.

Abdeljalil was arrested last September in Zamboanga City on charges of having an expired visa. He was ordered deported after interrogation.

AP

NEWSBRIEFS

No ban on Pinoys in Saipan

FILIPINOS are not among nationals from 30 countries banned from entering the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), whose main island is Saipan, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration Administrator Rosalinda Dimalipis-Baldoz announced yesterday. Citing a report from the Office of the Philippine Overseas Labor Office, Saipan, CNMI, Baldoz said that the CNMI Division of Immigration has stopped the release of entry permits to nationals of 30 countries for security and health reasons. The 30 countries are Fujian Province (China), Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Cuba, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, North Korea, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, UAE and Yemen.

"According to the CNMI Division of Immigration, the government of the excluded locations have continuously failed to provide adequate background information about their nationals who desire to travel to said country, thus burdening the legal and immigration enforcement systems of the Commonwealth," Baldoz said in a press statement.

DFA secretary in Hanoi

HANOI—Philippine Foreign Secretary Delia Albert met with her Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Dy Nien yesterday in Hanoi ahead of this week's Asean foreign ministers retreat. Albert, who arrived in the communist nation Sunday, was accorded an official welcoming ceremony at Government House, before heading into closed-door talks with Nien. She was also due to meet later Monday with Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Van Khai and President Tran Duc Luong. During the meetings, Albert was expected to express the Philippine commitment to help Vietnam in tackling bird flu, which has killed 15 people in the country, as well as measures to enhance cooperation. On Thursday she will take part in the Asean foreign ministers' retreat at picturesque Halong Bay, 200 kilometers east of Hanoi. Officials say the creation of a regional security community will figure high on the agenda.

AFP

Newsman's wife dies in US

MARIANERIE Villena Naval, wife of former Times Journal managing editor Reynaldo P. Naval, died of cirrhosis of the liver last Jan. 30 at the Greenville Memorial Hospital in Jersey City, New Jersey, USA. She is survived by her husband, sons Reynaldo Jr. and Rey Bobot; daughters Susan, Nenita, Pilarcita, Bernadita and Jesusa; sons-in-law Alim Khan, Rafael Allgada, J. R. Russell and Joey Poblete; daughters-in-law, Chit de la Rama and Velma Sanchez and nine grandchildren. Mrs. Naval's remains were cremated and taken to Dasmariñas, Cavite, for prayers and viewing. Her remains will be flown back to Jersey City for final interment.

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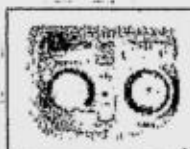
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The WORLD

Editor Luverne B. Gueco

UN to send peacekeeping force to Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE—US Marines were arriving in Haiti early Monday to launch an international force to restore order as exiled president Jean Bertrand Aristide sought refuge in South Africa.

A Marine contingent took up combat positions at Port-au-Prince airport just before the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of a multinational force in Haiti for up to three months.

Canadian special forces, who had secured the airport earlier to protect the evacuation of Canadians, were still at their posts and French troops and gendarmes were expected to arrive on Monday.

Aristide flew out from the same airport with US help more than 12 hours earlier, under pressure from a mounting insurrection and abandoned by the international community.

The exiled president was in Bangui early Monday. He and his wife were expected to stay in the Central African Republic for a few days before heading into exile in South Africa, according to an official from the republic's state protocol department.

In Pretoria, South Africa officials however said they were unaware of a reported plan for Aristide to seek asylum there.

Aristide's departure sparked a rampage through the streets of Port-au-Prince by angry pro-Aristide gangs armed with guns and machetes. At least 12 deaths and many more injuries were reported.

Widespread looting targeted warehouses and banks. Some people ran through the streets

carrying suitcases of banknotes. But a dusk-till-dawn curfew appeared to be holding with just sporadic firing into the night.

After the unanimous Security Council vote, UN chief Kofi Annan said the international community was standing by Haiti in its "hour of need."

The United States was to send up to 500 troops, according to a US defense official with 200 Marines in the initial deployment. France said it would dispatch 200 troops from bases in the French Caribbean and 100 gendarmes.

Canada said it would also contribute. Its troops were at Port-au-Prince airport Sunday to organize an evacuation of Canadian nationals.

"My resignation will avoid bloodshed," Aristide, the firebrand former Roman Catholic priest in the Port-au-Prince shanties said in a farewell statement, read by Prime Minister Yvon Neptune.

"I decided to respect and make people respect the constitution," said Aristide, who became Haiti's first democratically elected leader in 1990 only to be toppled by a coup the following year.

"The constitution should not drown in the blood of Haitian people," added Aristide, who was restored to power by US troops in 1994, but fell out of favor with many of his countrymen and the



BONIFACE Alexandre (left), Haiti's Supreme Court Justice, confers with Haitian Prime Minister Yvon Neptune after news of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's departure in Port-au-Prince Feb. 29. Alexandre assumed power following the resignation of Aristide and appealed for calm.

AFP

international community following flawed elections in 2000.

Aristide's constitutional successor, Supreme Court chief Boniface Alexandre, 68, urged an end to the violence that has left scores dead since former members of the Haitian armed forces began an insurrection more than three weeks ago in the northern city of Gonaives.

"Haiti, I exhort you to remain

calm. No one should take justice into their own hands," Alexandre said.

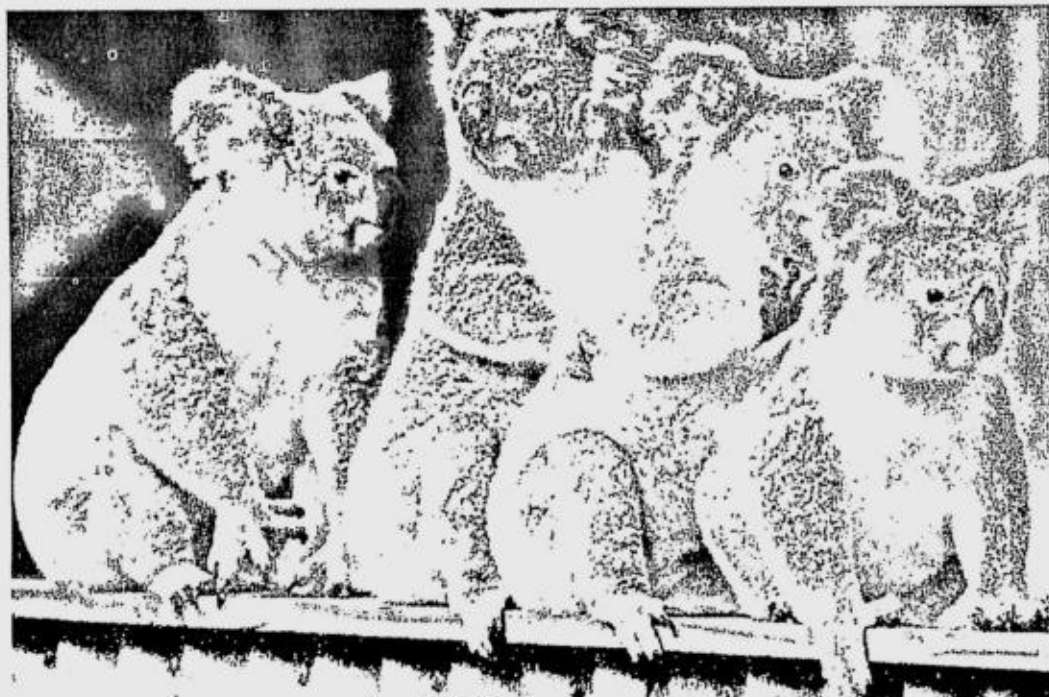
Aristide's political foes, who had refused to sign onto an internationally backed peace deal because it did not require the president's departure, said they were pleased with developments.

And top rebel leader Guy Philippe said his forces, who have seized much of the country and

surrounded Port-au-Prince, were ready to lay down their weapons following Aristide's resignation.

"We are ready to get rid of our weapons. We need an international force," Philippe said from Haiti's second largest city, Cap-Haitien.

A group of some 25 armed insurgents was reported to be in the capital and Philippe, a former police commissioner, said he may enter the city.



REPRIEVE—Authorities in South Australia state rejected March 1 calls from conservationists to cull thousands of koalas that are stripping trees on an island, saying it would spark a damaging tourist backlash. Picture shows a group of koalas sitting atop a fence.

AP

Australia orders independent inquiry of pre-Iraq war intel

CANBERRA—Australia ordered an independent inquiry on Monday into pre-Iraq war intelligence on the advice of a parliamentary report that found the threat of weapons of mass destruction may have been overstated.

Prime Minister John Howard, who sent 2,000 military personnel to Iraq, bowed to growing pressure to follow the United States and Britain and hold an independent inquiry to address concerns the threat of weapons was exaggerated to justify the war.

Almost a year after the US-led invasion toppled Saddam Hussein, no biological or chemical weapons have been found.

"We will follow the advice to have a former intelligence expert constitute the inquiry and the terms of reference will broadly

reflect what was recommended," Howard told parliament.

A parliamentary committee that oversees Australian intelligence services said the conservative government was "more measured" than its alliance partners but had not always accurately portrayed the intelligence it received.

The case made by the government was that Iraq possessed WMD in large quantities and posed a grave and unacceptable threat to the region and the world, particularly as there was a danger Iraq's WMD might be passed to terrorist organization," it said.

"This is not the picture that emerges from an examination of all the assessments provided to the committee by Australia's two analytical agencies."

Committee chair David Jull said Australian spy agencies were "more moderate and cautious" than US and British partners.

But while most Australian spy agencies said any WMD in Iraq were "small stocks," the Office of National Assessments, which advises Howard, was more ready to use untested intelligence to argue it was "highly likely" Iraq had WMD.

"Despite their caution, insofar as they thought there were any weapons of mass destruction left in Iraq, it is possible they overstated their case," Jull told parliament.

The report recommended a review of Australia's intelligence agencies, conducted by an experienced former intelligence expert with full access to all material available before the war. Reuters

China strikes back, slams US rights record

BEIJING—China Monday published a scathing attack on the human rights situation in the United States, retaliating for a similar report issued by Washington last week that accused Beijing of backsliding on its rights record.

Only days after slamming the US report as "interference in its internal affairs," the State Council, China's cabinet, countered with its own criticism.

Allegations of US atrocities in the wars on Iraq and Afghanistan led the way.

"In recent years, the United States has practiced unilateralism on the international stage, wantonly engaged in military adventures, violently invaded the sovereignty of other nations and left the mark of rights violations

everywhere," the 2003 US Rights Violation Record said.

"Since the United States initiated the war on Iraq, 16,000 Iraqis have been killed including 10,000 citizens," the report said.

With a \$400-billion defense budget, US defense spending is bigger than military expenditures of the rest of the world combined, while the United States is the world's biggest seller of arms.

It was responsible for more than 48 percent of all conventional weapons sales to the developing world in 2002, the report said.

Rights violations were not only restricted to the 364,000 soldiers Washington has based in more than 130 countries, the report said, but also occurred at home where the United States remains one of the

world's most violent places to live.

"The United States leads the world in gun ownership, guns are everywhere and crimes involving guns are on the rise," it said.

Of the 15,980 murders committed in the United States in 2001, 63 percent involved guns, while 56 percent, or 16,586 people, who committed suicide in the US in 2000 used guns, it said.

The report also soundly blasted the US Patriot Act which has empowered the government to violate the rights and freedom of ordinary citizens, most notably American minorities, "in the name of national security and fighting terrorism," it said.

Despite routinely refusing to accept criticisms on rights abuses in China from groups like Human

Rights Watch and Amnesty International, the Chinese report liberally used documentation by such groups on US rights violations.

"According to a Human Rights Watch report in September 2003, one fifth of men in US prisons faced violent and dangerous sexual encounters, while one in 10 were raped," the report said.

The report also cited Amnesty for evidence that police brutality in US jails led to the deaths of at least three prisoners in 2003.

The report further slammed US democratic politics as the politics of the rich and cited the 113 million dollars spent by George W. Bush's election campaign in 2000 and the projected 200 million dollars for this year's presidential elections.

AFP

Schroeder suffers election rout in Hamburg

HAMBURG, Germany—German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's Social Democrats suffered an election rout in their former stronghold of Hamburg on Sunday amid public anger over painful economic reforms, exit polls showed.

Polls broadcast by TV networks after polling stations closed at 6 p.m. showed the SPD suffering its worst post-World War Two result in the city at around 32 percent, with the conservatives surging to win an absolute majority.

The result is likely to fan specu-

lation Schroeder will water down his economic reforms to win back voters, and possibly reshuffle his cabinet in Berlin to give his government some fresh momentum.

The election in Germany's second largest city kicked off a year of 14 state, local and European Parliament elections, with voters incensed by a series of welfare cuts and health reforms that took effect in January.

Opinion polls have put national support for the Social Democrats (SPD) at less than 25 percent, some 20 points behind the conservative

Christian Democrats (CDU) for the best part of a year, putting increasing pressure on Schroeder, who has lost his aura as a vote winner.

The Hamburg defeat follows three landslide defeats in major states last year. Further losses this year and next would weaken Schroeder in the run-up to the next general election in 2006.

The SPD had hoped for an electoral boost in Hamburg after Schroeder quit as party chair on Feb. 6 in the face of grassroots discontent over his welfare cuts and

installed his more popular ally, Franz Mueentefering, as successor.

But exit polls showed the CDU with its popular mayor Ole von Beust jumping about 20 points from the last vote in 2001 to about 46.5 percent.

Schroeder's "Agenda 2010" of unemployment benefit cuts, rules for easier firing and healthcare reforms involving higher charges for visits to doctors is designed to revive Europe's largest economy and cope with the cost of an ageing population.

Reuters



DANGEROUS WORK, BUT NECESSARY

Cambodian Sing Chathu, 24, checks equipment before starting work in a minefield near the village of Ta Krouk, some 350 km northwest of the capital Phnom Penh. A member of one of the world's first all-women demining teams, she is working to clear mines and unexploded bombs left from decades of conflict in the impoverished southeast Asian nation.

REUTERS

Pakistan says it has struck no deal allowing US troops to hunt Osama

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan flatly denied on Monday a report that it had struck a deal to allow US troops to hunt for al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden on its territory.

"This report has no truth in it and there is no such deal," military spokesperson Maj. Gen. Shaikat Sultan said.

The latest issue of the New Yorker weekly said thousands of US troops would be deployed in a tribal area bordering Afghanistan in return for Washington's support for Islamabad's pardon last month of Abdul Qadeer Khan, a scientist who admitted leaking nuclear secrets to Iran, Libya and North Korea.

The article quoted a former senior intelligence official as saying it was "a quid pro quo" deal with Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf. "We're going to get our troops inside Pakistan in return for not forcing Musharraf to deal with Khan."

Sultan rejected this, saying: "There are no quid pro quos on issues of national sovereignty. We totally deny it."

He said he could not comment on reports that the United States planned to shift an elite commando unit that took part in the capture of Saddam Hussein in Iraq to hunt for Bin Laden.

"If the US is shifting a special unit from Iraq into Afghanistan, I have no comment on that, but there is none coming in to Pakistan," he said.

After the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, Pakistan became a key ally in the US-led war on terror and has arrested hundreds of al-Qaida suspects. But it says it will never allow foreign troops to hunt for militants on its soil.

US forces hunting al-Qaida and Taliban suspects in Afghanistan have expressed frustration about the ability of militants to elude them by slipping across the Pakistani side of the rugged border region and urged Pakistan to do more to help.

Pakistan says it has deployed tens of thousands of troops along its border with Afghanistan to prevent such movements.

Last week it said it detained 20 suspects in the South Waziristan tribal region, but none was a key al-Qaida figure.

On Saturday Pakistani troops killed at least 11 people they thought were militants when they opened fire on a van in the region. An intelligence official said those killed might not have been militants and the incident was a case of "mistaken fire."

Residents say fiercely independent tribesmen already sympathetic to al-Qaida have been angered by the deaths and civilian killings will not make the Pakistani task easier.

The New York Times on Saturday quoted senior US administration and military officials as saying President George W. Bush had approved a plan to intensify the effort against bin Laden.

Reuters

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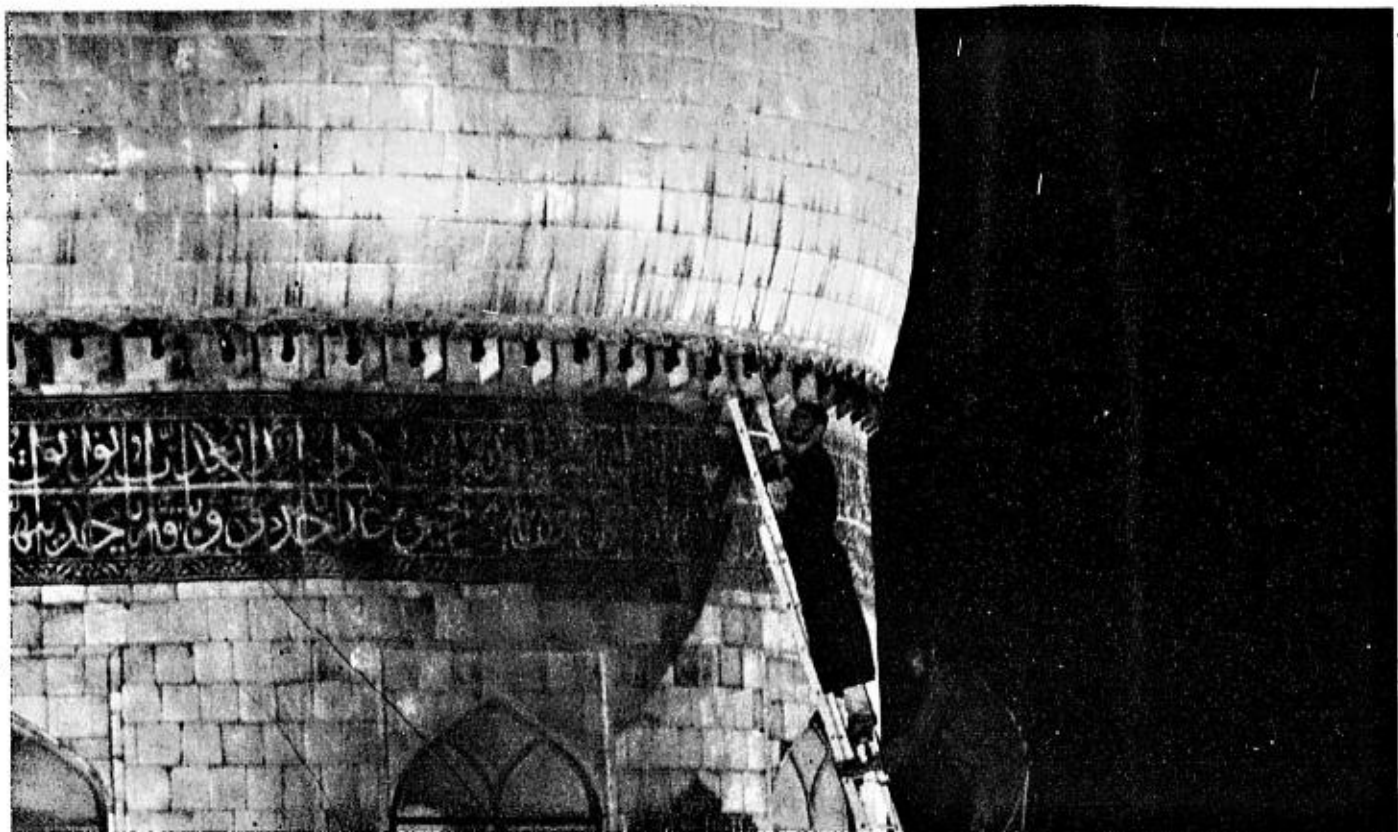


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Iraq leaders reach agreement on interim constitution



WORKERS polish decorative lights around the edge of the gold-tilled dome of the Imam Hussein shrine, as pilgrims arrive by the hundreds of thousands for the Ashoura holy days, in the holy Shiite city of Karbala, Iraq, Feb. 29. For the first time in decades Iraqi Shiite Muslims will be free to gather on Tuesday at Karbala for the climax of the Ashoura, the mourning of the death of one of their most important saints, Imam Hussein. AP

BAGHDAD—Iraq's US-appointed Governing Council put aside its differences and agreed on an interim constitution on Monday, a key step in Washington's plan to hand sovereignty back to Iraqis by June 30.

"Early this morning the Governing Council unanimously approved the Transitional Administrative Law after weeks of intensive discussions," the Council said in a statement. The document will be officially signed on Wednesday.

The 25-member Council had previously missed a Feb. 28 deadline to strike a deal due to divisions over the role of Islam, quotas for women in government and Kurdish demands for autonomy in northern Iraq.

Officials said the law recognized Islam as Iraq's official religion and said it would be a source—but not the sole source—of legislation. Shiites in the Governing Council had wanted Islamic law to be given precedence in family affairs.

"Islam will be the official religion of the state and it will be a source... of legislation. Also the law will say to respect Islam as the religion of the majority," Governing Council spokesperson Hameed Kefaei told the BBC.

"Federalism also has been approved as a form of government," Kefaei said, adding details of the agreement would be announced on Wednesday.

The constitution is due to provide a

framework for an interim government to take power on June 30 from the administration in Baghdad.

The Council brings together from Iraq's various ethnic and groups, including Shiite and Sunni Kurds and Turkmens.

During discussions on Friday, Shiite members of the Council, out, angered by the cancellation of a ruling that would have overrode and inheritance subject to the rulings of religious law.

Other sticking points had defining the role of women in government, with some Council pushing for the constitution to specific quota for the number of representatives or parliamentarians.

There had also been furor over federalism, with the Kurds have effectively had self-rule in northern provinces of Iraq since the Gulf War, pushing to enshrine the autonomy in the document.

Wednesday's signing ceremony followed the celebration of an Islamic festival Ashura, marking the 1,300th anniversary of the martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's grandson.

Officials said the negotiations were spirited and at times heated, but respectful.

With US presidential election

Blair faces new Iraq mess over legal advice

LONDON—The British government played down claims Sunday that its chief legal counsel had changed his advice on the legality of the Iraq war due to army concerns that troops could be prosecuted for fighting in an illegal conflict.

Attorney General Lord Peter Goldsmith was originally "sitting on the fence" and his initial advice on whether to invade Iraq was "prevaricating," but it was "tightened up" only days before the conflict began in March last year, the Observer newspaper quoted senior government sources as saying.

The paper claimed Goldsmith's advice was redrafted in order to assure the armed forces that the conflict would not be illegal.

The Independent on Sunday also reported that the attorney general had changed his stance in the run-up to the conflict to declare that the war was legal. The government has resisted calls to publish Goldsmith's advice.

Controversy over the Iraq war has returned to haunt Prime Minister Tony Blair in recent days, defying his efforts to refocus attention back onto the domestic political agenda.

Last week former cabinet minister Clare Short controversially claimed that Britain spied on United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan in the run-up to the war on Iraq.

Short, Britain's former international development secretary who quit in May in protest over the Iraq conflict, said she knew of doubts within the country's armed forces about the legality of war.

"I was told at the highest level... that the military were saying they wouldn't go (to war), whatever the PM said without the attorney general's advice," she told the Observer.

Later on Sunday, she told the ITV independent television network: "It is hard not to think (Goldsmith) may have been leant on."

She steered the debate back to Blair, saying "Tony is running this country in a deeply, deeply personal way and the institutions that we have to get these decisions right are crumbling."

John Major, the former conservative prime minister, urged Blair to release the attorney general's ad-

vice, telling BBC television the row was "poisoning the whole political atmosphere."

Given that Goldsmith probably judged that the war was legal, he said, "I cannot myself see the justification for not publishing what the attorney general's opinion was."

A member of Blair's cabinet, leader of the House of Commons Peter Hain, denounced the claims as politically slanted.

"We have a fog of fabrication and allegation not backed up by any evidence at all to suggest that the government did anything in any underhand way," he said.

"I think it is a deliberate effort to refocus from the most successful government and prime minister in living memory and to try to sidetrack everyone into what I think has become a very old story," Hain told ITV.

Edwards snarls at Kerry in debate ahead of 'Super Tuesday'

NEW YORK—Democratic presidential underdog John Edwards tried to take several bites out of front-runner John Kerry Sunday, in a last-ditch attempt to gain ground ahead of their potentially decisive "Super Tuesday" showdown.

While both men united during a televised debate in slamming George W. Bush over Haiti, Iraq and North Korea, Edwards markedly spiced up his previously mild criticisms of the veteran senator from Massachusetts.

With polls giving Kerry a good shot at sweeping all 10 state contests Tuesday and virtually clinching the nomination, Edwards sought to paint his rival as a Washington insider, divorced from the real world, with fundamentally different policies on foreign trade that are costing US jobs.

In particular, the North Carolina senator mocked Kerry's campaign commitment to set up a committee that would spend 120 days reviewing trade accords.

"What you're going to say to a family that's lost their job because of bad trade agreements is, 'Don't worry, we've got

a Washington committee that's studying this for you,'" Edwards said.

"It's the same old Washington talk that people have been listening to for decades. They want something different," he added.

Kerry was quick to hit back at the freshman senator, saying the country needed a president with "the proven ability to be able to stand up and take on tough fights."

A total of 1,151 nominating delegates, more than half the 2,162 needed for the nod will be at up for grabs Tuesday in New York, California, Ohio and seven other states, with polls showing Edwards trailing in all of them.

Kerry already has 727 delegates sewed up and Edwards 212 in the race for a spot on the Nov. 2 ballot against Bush.

Despite strong hints from senior Democratic leaders that the time is coming for the party to rally behind a single candidate, Edwards insisted he would stay in the race even if he loses across the board on Tuesday.

"The American people deserve this

choice. And we are a very different choice," Edwards said.

Both men, as well as minor candidates Al Sharpton and Dennis Kucinich, reserved most of their fire Sunday for Bush, hitting him on everything, including the chaos in Haiti that prompted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to flee.

Kerry accused Bush of being "late as usual" to deal with the crisis and Edwards said the president had "ignored Haiti the same way he's ignored most of the countries in this hemisphere."

On Iraq, Kerry called for postponement if necessary of the June 30 deadline for restoring self-rule. "If the date works, terrific. But the test is not a date. The test is the stability and viability of Iraq," he said.

Edwards agreed, adding that the United Nations had to be involved.

"The key to this is that there be legitimacy as long as this, to the Iraqis, has the stamp, 'Made in America,'" he said.

They both criticized Bush for not doing enough to safeguard the Unit-

ed States from another attack like the Sept. 11, 2001 assault on the World Trade Center and that killed nearly 3,000 people.

Asked whether Bush could do more to prevent the strikes, "Absolutely, we could have done more since then, to No question about it. But we have done more since then, to

Both men said they would use military force against North Korea were proved that Pyongyang had weapons and presented a real threat to Japan and other Asian US allies.

Kerry accused the White House of failing to follow through on the efforts by the Clinton administration to negotiate with the North Koreans, saying "there is a deal to be struck."

"I have said that I would put all of the issues of the peninsula on the table, not just the nuclear is-

Some men get to call it home.

Marlboro Country.

Marlboro

Government Warning: Cigarette smoking causes lung cancer, heart disease, and emphysema.

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President George W. Bush's administration says it is determined to stick to plans to hand sovereignty back to Iraqis on June 30.

But the mechanism for selecting the interim government has yet to be agreed.

Top Shiite cleric Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani has rejected a US proposal that the transitional body be chosen by regional committees.

However, he has eased his demand for early elections since the United Nations joined Washington in saying polls were impractical before the end of June because Iraq has no electoral registers or laws.

Wary of sectarian and ethnic tensions in Iraq, Washington wants to ensure all groups are represented in the interim body.

But Shiites, oppressed for decades by the mainly Sunni government of Saddam Hussein, hope their majority status will ensure they have the greatest clout in the new Iraq.

Meanwhile, Iraq, which had come to a donor conference in Abu Dhabi with a list of urgent rebuilding projects totaling \$4 billion, walked away Sunday with a commitment for just a billion dollars for 2004.

At the end of a two-day meeting, Japan's ambassador to Baghdad, Masamitsu Oki, announced that the billion dollars had been committed to two trust funds that will channel money into the projects.

Reuters, AFP

Chavez calls Bush 'asshole' for meddling, vows to stay on

CARACAS, Venezuela—Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez called US President George W. Bush an "asshole" on Sunday for meddling, and vowed never to quit office like his Haitian counterpart as troops battled with opposition protesters demanding a recall referendum against him.

Chavez, who often says the US is backing opposition efforts to topple his leftist government, accused Bush of heeding advice from "imperialist" aides to support a brief 2002 coup against him.

"He was an asshole to believe them," Chavez roared at a huge rally of supporters in Caracas.

The Venezuelan leader's comments came as fresh violence broke out on the streets of the capital, where National Guard troops clashed with opposition protesters pressing for a vote to end his five-year rule.

Military helicopters roared in low runs overhead as soldiers fired tear gas and plastic bullets to repel several hundred opposition demonstrators who threw stones and set up burning barricades in eastern Caracas late into the night.

Troops and opposition activists also skirmished in other cities.

"We call on the country to continue with peaceful resistance," opposition leader Enrique Mendoza said. "This fight will last as long as necessary."

A soldier and a cameraman were shot and injured during the clashes and an opposition protester was wounded in the head by gunmen firing from motorbikes, witnesses and officials said.

Electoral authorities, citing the need to preserve peace in the country, said they were postponing until Monday the preliminary results of their verification of the opposition's petition for a recall vote.

One demonstrator carried a banner reading: "Bye bye Aristide, Chavez you're next," referring to Haiti's leader Jean-Bertrand Aristide, who fled into exile on Sunday in the face of an armed rebellion.

But the firebrand populist vowed to defeat any attempt to unseat him and threatened to cut off oil supplies to the United States from the world's No. 5 crude oil exporter should Washington try an invasion or trade sanctions.

"Venezuela is not Haiti and Chavez is not Aristide," he said.

Tens of thousands of Chavez supporters marched earlier on Sunday to protest what they condemned as US meddling in Venezuelan affairs. The US State Department routinely dismisses the president's accusations. Reuters



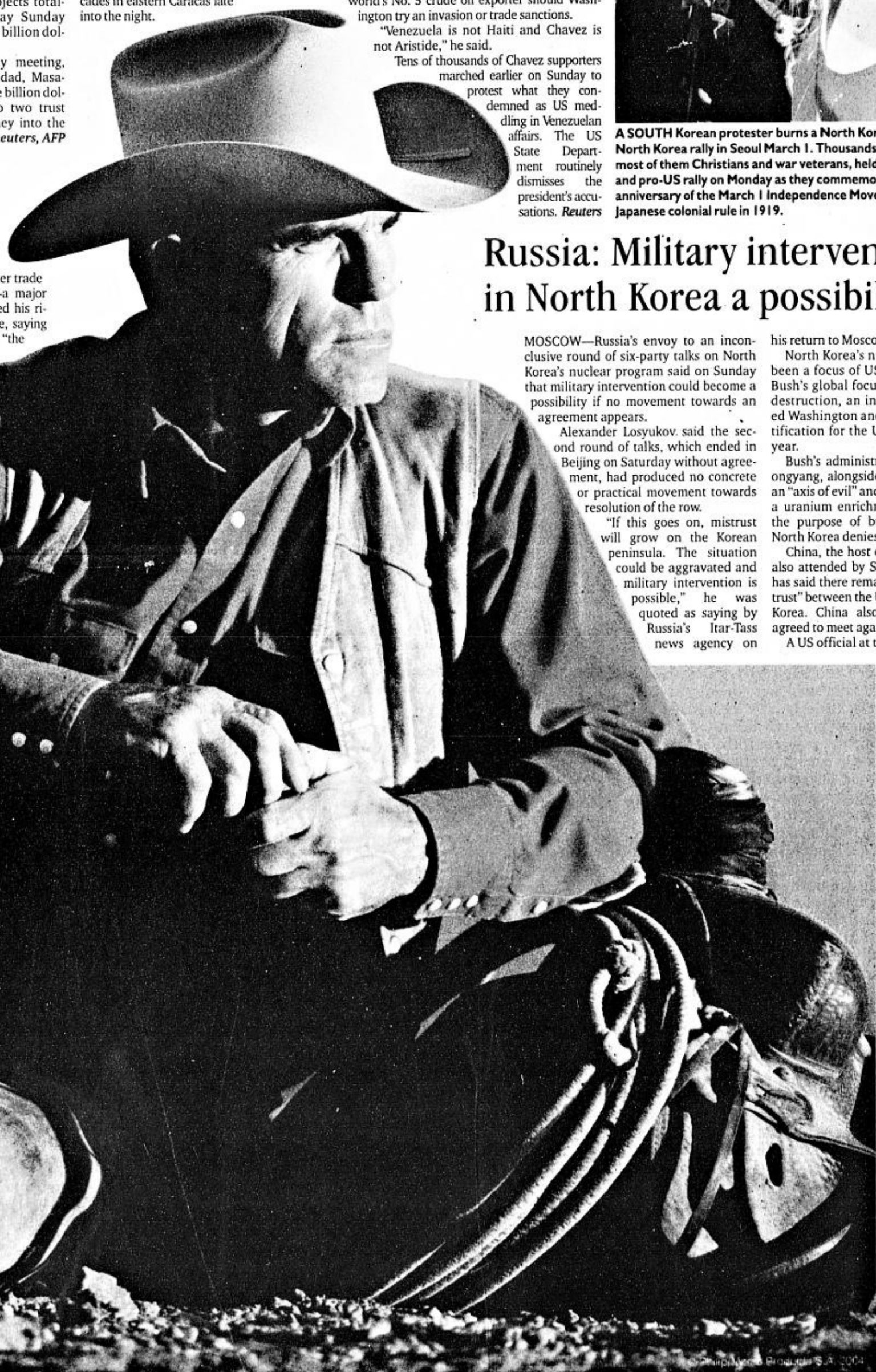
A SOUTH Korean protester burns a North Korean flag at an anti-North Korea rally in Seoul March 1. Thousands of South Koreans, most of them Christians and war veterans, held an anti-North Korea and pro-US rally on Monday as they commemorated the 85th anniversary of the March 1 Independence Movement against Japanese colonial rule in 1919. -REUTERS

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Under fire from Edwards over trade and its impact on US jobs—a major campaign issue—Kerry accused his rival of coming late to the issue, saying he's talked more about trade in "the last five weeks" than he had for his entire five-year terms in the Senate. AFP



Russia: Military intervention in North Korea a possibility

MOSCOW—Russia's envoy to an inconclusive round of six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear program said on Sunday that military intervention could become a possibility if no movement towards an agreement appears.

Alexander Losyukov said the second round of talks, which ended in Beijing on Saturday without agreement, had produced no concrete or practical movement towards resolution of the row.

"If this goes on, mistrust will grow on the Korean peninsula. The situation could be aggravated and military intervention is possible," he was quoted as saying by Russia's Itar-Tass news agency on

his return to Moscow.

North Korea's nuclear ambitions have been a focus of US President George W. Bush's global focus on weapons of mass destruction, an initiative which provided Washington and London with the justification for the US-led war in Iraq last year.

Bush's administration has labelled Pyongyang, alongside Iraq and Iran, part of an "axis of evil" and accused it of pursuing a uranium enrichment programme with the purpose of building bombs, which North Korea denies.

China, the host of the talks which were also attended by South Korea and Japan, has said there remains an "extreme lack of trust" between the United States and North Korea. China also said all parties had agreed to meet again before end of June.

A US official at the talks said the American goal of completely dismantling all the North's nuclear arms programs had "essentially been accepted by all the participants except the DPRK (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea)." Losyukov said Washington was maintaining a tough stance but added that there were political interests which made a deal unlikely before the US presidential election in November.

"The North Korean problem is unlikely to be solved before the US election," he said. "There are political factors involved here."

Pyeongyang has offered to freeze its nuclear programs but wants a security guarantee and aid in return, including help in meeting its energy needs.

An international consortium was formed in 1995 to meet those needs by building and running two light-water nuclear reactors which could not be used to produce weapons-grade material.

But Losyukov said the project—run by the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), which suspended its work while the talks were underway—was now dead.

Losyukov also said the jury was still out on the question of whether North Korea actually had any nuclear programs.

"Nobody knows, the question remains unclarified," Interfax news agency quoted him as saying. Reuters

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Debates

FERNANDO Poe Jr. continues to shy away from a debate. He says that debates are divisive, that they consist of just a lot of talk, and what he wants is not talk but action. But at the same time he admits that he is a student, he wants to learn, and particularly, he wants to have a cram course in economics. If he wants to be a good student, preparing for the difficult tasks of the presidency, then why not have a cram course in debating also?

EDITORIAL

Debates in a free, democratic society such as ours are not useless, idle exercises. Debates held during the election campaign help voters make their choices. In a debate, the incumbent running for reelection, on one hand, can argue for his continuance in office. On the other hand, a candidate can argue that the incumbent should be booted out of office and that he should replace him. Voters want information to be able to vote intelligently, and one way of giving this information is through debates.

Debates increase knowledge, tolerance and understanding. The debater develops an appreciation of the two sides of a major issue. He learns about argumentation and about the subject matter that he is debating with the opposing side.

Debates teach advocacy skills. A debater is better able to articulate positions that he strongly believes in. Debates promote critical thinking. A debater has to select the best evidence that will support his arguments and anticipate the arguments and responses of his opponent. Debates enhance research skills. The debater has to read up and research on the topic under discussion.

Knowledge, tolerance and understanding; advocacy skills; critical thinking; research skills—all these are needed by a president if he or she intends to govern well. These are things that not only surrogates or advisers should have. A president should have them if he really wants to be a hands-on manager of a nation.

In life, one cannot avoid engaging in a debate at one time or another, in one form or another. Men and women have been debating with one another since the beginning of time when the serpent first debated with Eve the benefits of eating the Fruit of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden.

Francis Bacon said that "reading maketh a full man; conference [meaning public speaking, and impliedly debating], a ready man; and writing an exact man." When one engages in debate frequently, one becomes ready at any time to engage in discussion and argumentation.

The debater learns to be thorough and accurate. He learns to analyze and to distinguish between the important and the unimportant. He learns the need to prove his statements and to support every statement with solid evidence and sound reasoning. He learns to present ideas in a clear and effective manner. He learns to use his head in time of need and to think on his feet and under pressure. He learns to think logically. A president has to be able to do all these things.

US President John F. Kennedy said he thought that debating was the most valuable training for politics and the law. "A good debater must not only study material in support of his own case, but he must also, of course, thoroughly analyze the expected argument of his opponent. The give and take of debating, the testing of ideas, is essential to democracy," Kennedy said. Kennedy won the televised debates with Richard Nixon, and went on to win the US presidency.

So to FPJ and his handlers, we say: Let's not knock debates. They do serve a good purpose in a democracy and help voters obtain information about a candidate's platform and his stand on the major issues. The voters can also observe a candidate's preparedness for the office and his behavior and performance under pressure.

Debating is not an either-or preposition: either one is a good action man or one is a good speaker. One can be a good action man and still be a good speaker. Indeed, the presidency requires a man who is able to articulate his thoughts clearly and who can translate those thoughts into action. Aristotle said in "The Rhetoric" that "if it is a disgrace to a man when he cannot defend himself in a bodily way, it would be absurd not to think him disgraced when he cannot defend himself with reason in a speech."

We still hope that FPJ will agree to join in a debate with the major presidential contenders. With President Macapagal-Arroyo agreeing to most of his conditions, he should be more receptive now to the holding of a debate. But if all else fails, we would suggest a townhall-meeting type discussion. The important thing is that the candidates should be able to discuss their programs with the voters.



Have visa, will travel

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado



The largest group has proven hardest to track: Filipinos who slip to Sabah in pumpboats or vintas—and blend into the native populations who share cultural and psychological traits, even physical features.

"Initially serving as a vent for underutilized labor, foreign markets now are important regular employers," says the Philippine Human Development Report.

"Foreign earnings raised income for about 20 percent of families," PHDR estimates. You see that in repainted homes, TV sets, refrigerators—and continued schooling and medical care for folk left back home.

But there's a data gap on migration's social and institutional costs. We've not tallied the bill for talented people, driven abroad by Marcos' repression.

Columnist Alfredo Rocas felt stifled by the "New Society." Quietly, he slipped to Australia, and there he racked up a distinguished career in editing and book publishing.

On behalf of then Daily Mirror columnist Amando Doronila, the Australian prime minister brought The Age's newspaper petition to Marcos and left a hold-departure order.

"Doronila?" the dictator dissembled. "Doronila? The name sounds familiar. I'll look into it." That prodded colleagues to josh the columnist later: "Doro. The man didn't even know you."

Doronila returned after People Power I. Rocas did not. But their children inevitably sank roots into the country that gave them sanctuary. Second-generation children of families that fled Marcos now make their mark in Canada,

the United States, Britain and other havens.

But what does prolonged parents' absence do to children? Do families unravel? A caregiver says when she left, her youngest was two. "Now, she's 14. And I'm a stranger to my family."

Who returns? Why? How do brides adjust, Filipina Ruths "who stand amidst the alien corn?"

"Two different cultural worlds collide," says a study of 20,164 Filipino-Japanese marriages over a five-year period, published by Ateneo University's Philippine Studies

The analysis focuses on elderly grooms who farmed in Yamagata. The brides came from Bataan, Bicol, Cavite and Leyte. Over a third had gone to college. Almost half were over 30, leery of being tagged "old maids."

"The Japanese was unprepared for the independent spirit of the foreigner wife," the study found. The Filipina was not ready for "the obedience expected of her by her in-laws." Characteristics peculiar to the Japanese family caused the most stress, psychiatrist Norihiko Kuwayama observed.

Migration won't ebb soon. There's been a surge in demand for and care-givers. Massive poverty, joblessness and frustration shove people abroad.

About 19 out of every 100 would go for good, a Pulse Asia survey finds. That's "a world record in proportion of nationals opting... to settle somewhere else for good," pollster Felipe Miranda notes.

In an earlier column, Ramon Farolan sketched careers of two airmen, second-generation migrant families: Nolan Diestro of the US Air Force Academy and Northwest Airlines' Francis Mercado.

"For both (pilots), time, distance and careers tend to weaken Philippine roots," Farolan wrote. "But they'll hold warm affection for the country... and as valuable assets to our human community," they underscore the old counsel: "Bloom wherever you're planted."

(E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph)

Past, present, future

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros



other hand, dream of living abroad, if only temporarily, by becoming OFWs. Easy to not care about despoiling the country, or letting it go to the dogs, when you think you have a way out, a ticket to the next plane, when the time comes. While other peoples think of ways to douse the flames, we think of ways to run away from the burning house.

Nothing cures that faster than reading history in all the senses of the word "read." I can vouch for that from experience. I grew up in a place resolutely given to "colonial mentality," as Claro M. Recto called it. What dispelled it was learning what happened in the past, about the exploits of Jose Rizal and company, about the American War, about the Japanese War. I'm not even talking about appreciating particular interpretations of the past (that would come later), I'm simply talking about knowing the events of the past. Just learning about them gave me the sensation of seeing for the first time after being blind all my life. I was never the same again.

You get to see the past, you get to ask questions about the present. You get to see the past, you demand to have a future. Above all, you get to have a sense of belonging to the country, or as that sublime Filipino word goes, *malasakit* for it. You get to have compassion for the country, sympathy for the country, a desire to do something for the country.

Second, I'll make sure we have a present. There's a dialogue in Ditsi Carolino's "Riles" where one of the dwellers along the railroad tracks tells a candidate it's all very nice to have jobs and livelihoods, but people are hungry, they cannot wait. A bird in hand is worth two in

the bush, and that isn't completely figurative to the poor. What this means is that the one thing we need do for the present is provide food.

That is done by unrelentingly pursuing a policy of food security, or as the phrase now goes, food sovereignty. I don't know that the change is an improvement—"security" sounds more real and urgent. The poor are insecure food-wise; they don't have any. Enough of this idiotic policy of letting the market govern everything. Some things may not be left to chance, or the vagaries of life. Food is the first of them. The most developed countries themselves—the United States, the European countries and Japan refuse to do so and heavily subsidize their food production. The price of our rice is one of the highest in Asia, a monumental irony in light of the Green Revolution starting in Los Baños. It can't be solved by more and more importation, which merely puts us at the mercy of global storms. As it is, the value of the peso is at an all-time low.

We want food, let's produce food. And back it up with all the resources we have.

And third, I'll make sure we have a future. That is done by education. Eggie Apostol is right (see her article last Sunday on our front page), the logical extension of the Edsa Revolution is the revolution of education. I'll have more to say about that in a future column. Suffice it to say here that Rizal was right there, too. By this I do not just mean the education that happens in schools, though that is a vital part of it. Elementary and high school in particular should not just be free, they should be compulsory. I do not mind truancy being punished, or having authorities going after truants. Some things may not be left to chance, particularly dispelling ignorance. But beyond schooling, I mean turning media and the other institutions of this country into giant, extension-work classrooms. That means, of course, educating media and the other institutions themselves in the first place. But that's another story.

Feel free to use in whole or in part, candidates. I'm completely shareware.

FPJ's MTVs will be 'scripted'—Roco

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo doesn't want to join the presidential debate next month unless her main rival, Fernando Poe Jr., joins it too. Palace insiders say that GMA's refusal stems from the fact that FPJ is her chief rival. It's easy to understand why GMA would consider it useless to take part in a debate minus FPJ. The two other candidates, Raul Roco and Panfilo Lacson, have everything to gain from being on the same platform with her, but they are not her chief rival.

Unfortunately Da King remains scared stiff of a joining debate and media political kibitzers were near unanimous in noting that FPJ's recent interview with Max Soliven on "Impact" did not project him well, despite his very congenial show host. Bulacan Rep. Wilhelmino Alvarado probably expressed the sentiments of many citizens when he said to this columnist recently, "We in Bulacan are hoping the debate between GMA and FPJ would push through, as this would show what the latter is capable or not capable of doing." But FPJ doesn't want a debate, saying he would rather elucidate on his platform of government via "music videos" (MTVs). But as Roco has pointed out, these MTVs are again "scripted" by someone else.

At the dinner hosted by Speaker Jose de Venecia recently for Dr. Norbert Lammert, vice president of the German Parliament's Lower House, I had a chance to chat with three House members supporting the President: Bulacan's Rep. Alvarado and Rep. Reyline "Neneng" Nicolas and Marikina's Rep. Del de Guzman. I asked them how the campaign was going, and the three Lakas House members admitted that some voters in their respective districts are enamored of the movie star but GMA was fast catching up. We have to admit that many Filipinos are star-struck, said De Guzman, a UE political science graduate and former three-term vice mayor of Bayani Fernando in Marikina before he ran for the House, "but GMA is making headway on the platform of performance." Nicolas noted that GMA had become far more cordial and approachable with her winning smiles, and was shedding that "taray"

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan



image. Had GMA been that way, mused the congresswoman, "there wouldn't have been any problem from the beginning."

Alvarado, a former banker with an economics background and mayor of Hagonoy for 12 years who is now running for his third term in Bulacan's first district, admitted that FPJ had some strength in province. But he predicted that GMA would rise on the politics of achievement. Alvarado took pains to enumerate some of the benefits his district and the province got from GMA, noting that Bulacan was the only province in the country where two flyovers are under construction, one at the crossing of Baliuag and the other at the crossing of Malolos. In addition, four big bridges are being constructed in his district, one of them with funding from the Asian Development. Another bridge is going up in Nicolas' district and two more in Rep. Lorna Silverio's third district.

But the projects that should have the biggest impact on Bulacan and Central Luzon, said Alvarado, would be the improvements on the Bulacan State University campus in Malolos made possible through the help of GMA. He pointed out that Ms Macapagal implemented the transfer of some 20 additional hectares from the old Voice of America property to the BSU which will be the site of its new college of medicine and of nursing. A five-story industrial technology building is also under construction, with funds also provided by GMA.

Alvarado pointed out that Gov. Josie de la Cruz, who is running for her third term, and the four members of Congress are all from Lakas-NUCD. If you recall, he said, the word

"barangay" came from "balangay," which means a raft or "balsa." To move that raft, all the people on it have to row together. The same is true also of Bulacan's politicians, he said, they are out to make GMA win on the politics of achievement.

The story of Filipino conjoined twins Carl and Clarence Aguirre of Silay City continues to grip the whole world, as they face their fourth, and hopefully, final surgery in their long struggle for physical separation. Tens of thousands of people around the world are praying hard for them, as the phenomenon of conjoined individuals occurs in one out of over 10 million live births. Far fewer survive into infancy, but the odds of their surviving separation surgically are even far slimmer, given past history.

Not too long ago, Cecile Alvarez and I had on our dzRH Sunday evening program Menchu Sarmiento, executive director of the Philippine Air Lines Foundation, PAL's community relations arm, which helped get all the preliminary tests done on the twins and then flew them and their mother to New York City's Montefiore Medical Center. There the first three operations were done and now the fourth one awaits them. Sarmiento told us about the intense drama behind preparing the boys medically for this big event and all the kind-hearted people here and abroad who helped bring it about. Not the least of these kind patrons was PAL Foundation, which linked up the boys and their mother with Children's Chance Connecticut (CCCT), an NGO that helps children from all over the world get medical care (Sarmiento is a trustee of CCCT).

When the Aguirres got to New York, as arranged by PAL's interline partner, American Airlines Miles for Kids, more Filipino-Americans got to know of CCCT and how it works with the foundation to help the neediest Filipino children get the best medical care. CCCT has since affiliated with Home Reach Foundation in New York, a volunteer group of Fil-Ams. The Aguirres are only the latest recipients of medical help through PAL Foundation. Orchids to PAL.

(Next: The kind-hearted souls.)

In concrete terms

AT LARGE



Rina Jimenez-David

mined to embark on a population management program," specifically through the procurement and distribution of contraceptives "such as condoms and pills." By that statement alone, Lacson is showing himself to be a truly brave candidate. By bringing up this early in the game his intent to allocate funds for contraceptive purchases, Alvarado is putting his neck on the line, though he may have realized that he wasn't going to win the support of the Catholic Church and of conservative elements anyway, so there was no need to tiptoe around the issue.

Surprisingly, since his candidacy is a faith-based initiative, Eddie Villanueva has been just as candid about his support for a reproductive health program. He has declared that he will make "all methods" available, though taking care to add that these will be provided "in accordance with one's conscience and religious beliefs."

FERNANDO Poe Jr.'s declaration that he will "seek the cooperation of all sectors of society, including the Church" in formulating a family planning and reproductive health program sets off alarm bells among reproductive health advocates.

Dory Raterta, a lawyer and executive director of the Family Planning Organization of the Philippines, notes the presence of two well-known religious conservatives in the Poe camp: economic adviser Bernardo Villegas and former Sen. Kit Tatad who is part of Poe's senatorial slate. Presumably, the two will play prominent roles in the crafting of the policy arising from the "consultations." Poe's deliberately vague position also indicates a discomfort, or perhaps unfamiliarity, if not

indifference, to the issue.

Raul Roco says the "right" things and seeks to anchor his stance on basic principles of law and international conventions. But his personal unease with reproductive rights is reflected in statements he has let slip from time to time.

On the clash between repro health advocates and the Catholic bishops, for instance, he has stressed the need to "respect the majority feelings," asking how government can move forward on the issue "when you from the beginning quarrel with the majority."

My own take on this is that Roco should first ask who constitutes the majority in the first place, and what the majority opinion on the reproductive rights of couples and individuals is. He will find that the Filipino public has been quite supportive of reproductive rights for over a decade, that it is the Catholic Church or rather, the hierarchy, that is lagging behind public opinion.

Roco has also questioned the supposed promotion of the condom as "the instrument of national development." This seems an odd question to raise since no one has ever said that population management or family planning, as symbolized by the condom, is the key that will deliver us from poverty. Knowing this to be untrue, why does he keep bringing it up?

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has never made secret her abhorrence for modern family planning, save for natural family planning. This even if in her childbearing years she resorted to the aid of the pill to regulate her pregnancies. True, she has since amended her staunch support for NFP at the expense of the other modern methods, to a policy of "informed choice." But what I said of the budget being the true reflection of policy holds particularly true in her case. The majority of funds allocated for family planning has gone to a training program for NFP, even if the method has a high risk of failure and its success is difficult to measure.

Should GMA win, we will see either a bumper crop of "accidental" babies or a steep drop in the national libido.

A tale of Pangasinan (1)

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY



Bambi L. Harper

When the mayor called Lacaaden, who was also head of the settlements in Butiagan and places that bordered the towns of Sto. Tomas and Aringay, arrived and was informed of the governor's order, he answered that the settlements of Butiagan, Ambalin and Buayn were disposed to receive Baptism as soon as they were properly instructed and ready. He requested that Guinilaban be given to them so that it could be unified into one town. It took 30 days to communicate the information to the *principales* of those towns.

After 32 days, the brother of Lacaaden, Patay de Pintocuan, arrived from the *cabecera* of Lingayen with other infidel Igorots. Lacaaden was not with them since he was ill, but he was in agreement with his brother. Patay presented a list of those who were willing to submit to the government. They requested for admission together with their vassals and proposed to establish a town in the place called Guinilaban.

The rest of the infidels who were in the mountains did not submit, especially those of Tonglo, Apatoto and Darnusil. They and many others, when informed of the mission, prepared for war, threatening the town of Agoo and its *visitas*, especially those that submitted to the government. These towns in turn requested for help.

The list presented by the Igorots who had submitted reached 77.5 tributes, 180 adults who with the children added up to 336 souls that were

to be settled in five sites. They prepared them to choose the officials who would govern them. They were asked to construct a church where they could hear Mass to facilitate their settlement "bajo las campanas."

To march against the infidels, 1,080 men from surrounding towns were gathered in San Fabian. They were supported by 109 volunteers, 12 Spaniards and 15 *mestizos* with rifles, 6 stone-throwing mortars and small cannons. This force was divided into seven companies, each headed by a captain and other subalterns. They were equipped with a flag and a drum and fife player gave them a military air.

The mayor, who held the rank of captain, reviewed the troops on Feb. 21 and gave the orders for the march the next day. They went to the mountains in search of the infidels, accompanied by Dominican fathers who acted as chaplains.

In the afternoon of Feb. 22, the troops arrived in Sobosob on the skirts of the mountains, where a path overgrown by thickets had to be reopened so they could proceed to the Angalan river. Twenty-three men sallied forth the following day. A company of riflemen and cuirassiers served as vanguards, with the rest trying to follow closely. It was hard for them to do so given a terrain that stretched upward into cliffs and peaks leading down to the mouth of the river that was closed due to dense underbrush and bamboo thickets.

In that manner, they walked a league with great difficulty encountering giant reeds in the narrowest areas that closed the path. They found nailed spikes where the river was shallow. Nine natives were wounded in the feet. After this, they walked on the banks of the rivers to avoid the traps.

(Data from Pedro Paterno, "Historia de Filipinas," Vol. VII.)

Moeby and Cioumy

IN A DIRTY corner of an old pond lay the Kingdom of Protista. The kingdom was filled with old tires, smelly rubber boots and other debris. The water was murky and brown. Lots of decayed leaves had settled on the bottom of the pond. Not a sound could be heard except for the ripple of the wind on the water's surface.

Amidst this clutter lived trillions of microscopic unicellular creatures. When exposed to the light, they "photosynthesized" like a plant.

However, when kept in the dark, they became heterotrophic, meaning they would "eat" like an animal. These unique creatures were called "Protozoans."

There were different inhabitants of the kingdom such as Amoeba, Algae, Paramecium, Flagellates and Rotifers. Most of the time, they lived in harmony. However, they all watched out for the big hungry Amoebas, the cannibals of this quiet kingdom.

There was one special Amoeba who was different. He liked Paramecium. As a little orphan Amoeba, he had been taken in and raised by a family of Paramecium. This Amoeba was known as "Moeby." He had false feet called "pseudopods" and his shape was constantly changing.

Moeby's best friend was a Paramecium named "Ciomy." Ciomy was smaller, longer and had little hairy feet called "cilia" which he used to propel himself in the water.

One cloudy afternoon, the water of the pond seemed darker than usual. This made a gang of Amoebas feel very heterotrophic. They cornered a hapless Paramecium for their dining pleasure.

Just then, Moeby floated by and the gang called out to him, "Hiya, big fella! Wanna join us for dinner?"

Being a friendly Amoeba, he accepted the invitation, but to his horror, he saw that the meal-to-be was his best friend, Ciomy!

The darkness of the water made Moeby hungry for the Paramecium. But friendship was stronger than hunger. Thinking quickly, he called out to the gang of Amoebas: "Hey guys! I haven't had a bite in days! Can I go first?"

Initially, the others grumbled, but seeing how hungry Moeby looked, they agreed.

Moeby moved closer to Ciomy who looked terrified. Moeby whispered to him, "Don't worry, just play dead."

The large Amoeba started to change his shape by extending one part of his body to look like a giant mouth. In the blink of an eye, he swallowed the Paramecium in one big gulp and swam away from the gang.

Upon reaching a safe zone, Moeby spat out Cioumy who was gasping for breath, "Man, your mouth stunk, Moeby!"

"Is that the thanks I get for saving your life?" Moeby asked him.

"I was just kidding. Thank you so much for saving my life!"

"You're worth it, but next time, stay away from Amoeba in dark alleys. Except for me, of course."

The two friends floated upwards to the surface which was warm and bright as the sun had come out.

"Hey, partner! Whaddaya say we kick back and photosynthesize?"

Stefan Mapua-Osmeña, 11, is in Grade 5 at Southridge School in Muntinlupa. This science-based story, which he wrote after doing research on the Internet, won first place in the annual Scholastic Book Fair Story Writing Competition held at his school last August.

My green socks

Aliza L. Belarmino

WHEN I was in grade school, I never wore of a pair of socks which was not white. Blue, yellow orange and all other colors I considered ugly and mismatched with my well-pressed uniform. In high school I dreaded the times when we had to undergo Citizens Military Training because then we were required to wear black socks.

Now that I am on my second year in college, I usually wear socks that are colored green. And recently I began to wonder how much have I changed.

My choice of colors seem to reflect my views about life in general. When I was younger everything was either black or white, and there was nothing in between. If someone did something bad then he was a sinner who had to be avoided if possible. I always set high standards for myself in every activity I did. I took part in various extra-curricular activities and was bent on excelling in everything so I could win all the praises and attention and become very popular. My focus was on winning, but there were times when luck did not smile at me.

In high school, I never enjoyed the company of my friends and classmates outside of the classroom. I was often away, taking part in competitions, which at times would extend to a week or more. My world then consisted of school, house, church and the places I went to for competitions. My social life was limited to the very rare parties I attended with my classmates. I wasted opportunities to strengthen my bonds with my friends and today they are just faint figures of my past about whom I know so little.

Times have changed. I am now sympathetic towards the people around me. I go out of my way to listen and to know them personally. I may not be the "best" friend, but I know that I am a lot better than I was in high school. I see things now in all the shades of life. Winning is not my goal anymore but learning, enjoying life and passing all my subjects which are now the contests of my life. I no longer locate myself at one extreme side of a problem or an issue but midway, weighing all the facts and information before I make any judgment about people and issues.

Actually the changes in me started when my socks turned green. Who knows if they will be red in the future, but I do not know what my disposition will be if that will happen.

Aliza L. Belarmino, 18, is a Political Science sophomore at the University of the Philippines Cebu College.

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OPINION

Keep RP bird flu-free

I READ last Feb. 23, 2004 in the Business section the plan of Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisma to allow American chicken producer Perdue Farms to set up a chicken processing plant in Laguna Technopark. At first glance it would seem a good idea to help local chicken producers to export chicken but alas, the article goes on to say that Perdue will bring in dressed chicken from the US, processed here, (we assume cut up into portions) then reexported to

Japan and other Asian countries.

There are some vital elements the good secretary seems to have missed. Firstly, the US has confirmed outbreaks of bird flu mostly in the area where Perdue operates. Secondly, what happens to the leg quarters, etc. that Japan will not import. If the government was not able to prevent container loads of chicken being "smuggled" out of the Batangas port, how much more is it capable of stopping Perdue chicken from reach-

ing the local market right out of a processing plant in Laguna? Let us hope the agriculture secretary will kill this idea before it goes any further and this is only as Purisma states because of cheap labor costs in the Philippines.

If Perdue wants to dress chicken here, let them buy from local producers. Until now, the Philippines is bird flu-free. Let's keep it that way.

—ROBERT DIX,
Pangasinan

Dagupan's Guinness World Record feat

THIS has reference to the article titled "Dagupan may make it to Guinness for longest barbecue cookout," written by Yolanda Fuentes (PDI, 2/14/2004).

Fuentes wrote, "After two unsuccessful bids, and a lot of bangus (milkfish) burning on the grill, this city may finally make it to the Guinness World Records (GWR) for holding the longest barbecue cookout in the world."

The article clearly suggested that we failed to establish the new GWR but "...may finally make it." Our fellow Dagupenos were confused when the story came out. We believe most of your readers were similarly confused by the news item.

For the record, Dagupan City staged only two "Longest Barbecue" or "Kalutan ed Dagupan," specifically on April 30, 2002 and on May 3, 2003.

The first staging was more of a dry-run and we did not submit any official bid for GWR's longest barbecue. It was for the second staging that we sent a formal bid.

Fortunately, the second "Kalutan ed Dagupan" received official recognition as the longest barbecue in the Guinness.

Guinness World Records research services officer Marco Frigatti, in a communication sent to the city government said, "I am pleased to inform you that you have been successful in setting a new Guinness World Record" as he welcomed Dagupan City to "the very select brand of Guinness World Records holders."

He also sent a certificate to commemorate the achievement.

The certificate reads: "The longest barbecue measured 1,007.56 meters (3,305.64 feet) and was created by the people of Dag-

upan City, Philippines, on 3 May 2003 as part of the city's Bangus festival."

It is evident that Dagupan has officially established a new Guinness World Record, surpassing the 613-meter long barbecue set by Peru in 1999.

While Frigatti stated in his letter that, "...the certificate does not automatically guarantee an entry in their annual book, the managing editors do consider all new records for potential use in future Guinness World records publications and products," we take this as a standard clause of the Guinness to avoid complaints whenever a new record is not published immediately.

The fact remains. We are now a world record holder, and we are part of the database of Guinness.

—RAFAEL R. BARAAN,
city administrator,
Office of the Mayor, Dagupan City,



Kabayan's cornerstone policy

THE RECENT killing of a vice mayoral candidate in Mindoro and other forms of politics violence and mudslinging prevailing in the run up to the May national elections must be condemned and rejected. It has no place in a democratic and civilized society.

Contrary to the claims of some groups that Kabayan Noli de Castro is silent on the matter as well as on militarization prevailing in the province of Mindoro, he has in fact consistently shown his opposition to all forms of political violence. In his program of government, he has continuously espoused political reforms that will hopefully put an end to the cycle of electoral violence and traditional politics as a whole, which breeds this kind of violence.

As for the issue of militarization, De Castro has in fact reiterated in his program of action that the real solution to the internal conflict in our country is to address its root causes, which are social injustice and inequality.

That is the real solution, to address the massive poverty and economic inequality in our country which will eventually put an end to this cycle of political violence and militarization in the countryside. This is the cornerstone of a Noli De Castro vice presidency.

—ISKÓ CATTIBAYAN,
chair, Kay Kabayan Kal
Nationwide Citizen Volunteer
Movement, Quesda Bldg.,
Quezon Avenue cor. Edsa,
Quezon City

Unifier or dis-unifier?

IN SEVERAL interviews where presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. was asked why he is running for president, his answer was that he wanted to unite the nation.

It seemed the most straightforward and direct answer to such a very important question. But as the May 2004 elections draw nearer, it seems that FPJ's bid for presidency is becoming more and more of a "dis-unifier."

FPJ's candidacy is rapidly widening the gap that has separated the upper classes from the masses. The majority of the discerning class, knowing that leadership is more than popularity, will likely vote for a leader who has the relevant credentials to run our country. The masses, on the other hand, continue to delude themselves that FPJ is a hero and savior because he was able to defeat all those villains in his movies.

FPJ himself has argued that even without the relevant credentials, he will have no problem becoming the country's chief executive because he has assumed the role of a public servant such as a police and barangay tanod in some of his movies. Ridiculous,

but the masses buy it. In fact, the campaigners of FPJ, capitalizing on such blind belief, are threatening to stage massive protests should FPJ be disqualified from running because of his questionable citizenship. There you go. So much for unity.

To worsen the situation, his legal team continuously insists on smearing the credibility of critical government institutions such as the Supreme Court just to sway public opinion to their favor.

Yet, FPJ sincerely believes that he can unite the nation. How? As it is, the coming election is expected to be one of the most highly contested elections in our history. His No. 1 opponent, President Macapagal-Arroyo, has the machinery and support of the majority of the upper classes. It is being estimated that whoever between them wins the election, will win by a very small margin. If this happens, an election aftermath could be a nation torn and divided, so how will FPJ, a political neophyte, unite the country should he win?

Too bad, we can't squeeze out more rational statements from the man.

—MA. JOSEPHINE DELA MERCED,
midelamerced@yahoo.com

The ideal country

THE WORDS of a song offering by the Hindu mystic, Rabindranath Tagore, are quite appropriate as a prayer for all those who dream about and who work for social transformation. The translated lyrics are refreshing in the midst of many a candidate's rhetoric:

Where the mind is without fear
and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been
broken up into fragments by narrow
domestic walls;
Where words come out from

the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches
its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason
has not lost its way into the
dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward
by thee into ever-widening
thought and action—into that
heaven of freedom, my Father, let
my country awake.

—MAX M. DE MESA
member, Board of Trustees, Task
Force Detainees of the
Philippines, Cotabato City

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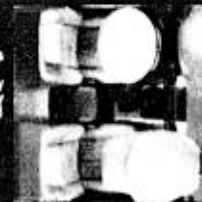
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Across the NATION

Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

Gov blocks total troop withdrawal

PIKIT, North Cotabato—The presence of the military inside Buliok Complex here remained to be the question that baffled even the members of the media after recent conflicting reports issued by top government officials themselves regarding the pull-out of Marines from this former Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) stronghold.

But North Cotabato Gov. Emmanuel Piñol said while the military stays in the Cotabato side of Buliok Complex, they will be gradually forced to vacate the Pagalungan, Maguindanao side.

Buliok is being shared by Pagalungan and Pikit and is thinly divided by the Pulangi River.

The governor said the pull-out of marine troops in the Pagalungan side of Maguindanao

started early February.

Silvestre Afable, chief government negotiator with the MILF, had announced over a national TV interview that the government had given in to the condition of the MILF to withdraw the government soldiers from the complex.

The pullout of troops was one of the three conditions set by the MILF before it would sit in the negotiating table opposite the government panel.

Reports indicated that the for-

mal peace talks will begin in March in Malaysia.

Piñol said he talked to Afable and Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, the incoming 6th Infantry Division chief, about the plan of the government to give in to the MILF demand.

"I found out that there was indeed a plan to pull out the Marines from Buliok. I said I myself would not want that the military to leave the people of Pikit now because there is this fear that another war will erupt if that

happens and the lives of the people will again be destroyed," Piñol said.

He said the pullout of troops from Buliok was an idea that he had been opposing because of its repercussion on the stability of the province.

"When I talked to them, I said 'you have to respect the position of the province of Cotabato. We simply cannot allow a group of negotiators to prevail over the sentiments of the people.' I told him I am going to sue him if he

will pull out the troops from Buliok," he said referring to the conversation he had with Afable.

"I will go to court and I will invoke the local government code because I believe that as the leader of the province of North Cotabato we have the power to decide the future of the province... and so we came up with (an) agreement that troops in the Cotabato side will not be touched," Piñol added.

Jeffrey Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau

MILF appears keen on peace pact, says Army general

PIKIT, North Cotabato—The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has been "behaving correctly" these past months, a top military official said.

Gen. Generoso Senga, 6th Infantry Division Chief, said there are indications that the MILF is serious in its bid to enter into a peace agreement with the government.

Proof to this, he said, is the silence of the MILF guns for some time now although there were some violations of some agreements between the MILF and the government.

"These violations seem to be out of their (top MILF leadership) control. Generally, what has been agreed upon has been followed well. But some of the violations committed by them have already been submitted to the Coordinating Council for the Cessation of Hostilities," Senga said.

Clash

Last month, government troopers and MILF rebels reportedly clashed in Barangay Pisan, the remotest village of the town of Kabacan in North Cotabato. A number of rebels were reportedly killed in the gunfight.

The military, Senga said, is continuously receiving reports about some MILF ground leaders as having involvement in some terror and kidnapping activities.

"We hope that there will be no more of this. We hope that the MILF leadership will take full control of all their forces and that they will be true to what they have been all this time saying that they are not part of the terrorist activities that has been happening here (sic)," Senga said.

Kidnappings

Senga said there was a decrease in the number of kidnapping cases in Central Mindanao since the fall of Buliok, a stronghold of the MILF, in February last year.

"We know that Buliok was used by kidnapers as their safe haven. With our control of Buliok, these criminal elements had been paralyzed," he said.

Jeffrey Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau



COMIC RELIEF

Actor Fernando Poe Jr., a candidate for President, laughs at the antics of fellow actor and comedian Dolphy at the residence of ex-justice secretary Harriet Demetriou in Tabaco City, Albay. Dolphy took a break from his show biz schedule to join Poe's campaign in the Bicol region.

EDWIN BALCASH/AP PHOTO

Sacked cop turns up suspect in Daet drug buy-bust

LEGAZPI CITY—A dismissed policeman was arrested during a drug buy-bust operation on Friday afternoon in Daet, Camarines Norte, by the Task Force Hunter of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency headed by Director Reynaldo Jaylo.

The task force confiscated 14 sachets or 38 grams of suspected shabu (methamphetamine hydrochloride), drug paraphernalia, several cellular phone units, a .38-cal. pistol, a .45-cal. pistol and an airgun at the residence of SPO1 Ramon Diego Hernandez on J. Lucban Street, Daet town.

Jaylo's group also seized several pieces of samurai believed to be part of Hernandez's collections and cash amounting to about P10,000 plus marked money.

Hernandez was with his partner Jackelyn Araña and Jackelyn's brother Richard.

The raid happened as Mary Ong alias Rosebud and Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption officials were conducting a symposium against illegal drugs in some schools in Albay province as part of their information campaign against

the illegal substance.

Hernandez and Richard were immediately brought to the PDEA main office in Manila on Saturday afternoon for further investigation while Jackelyn was detained at the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group headquarters in Daet.

They are facing charges of violation of RA 9165 or the Dangerous Drugs Act and illegal possession of firearms, aside from violation of the existing ban on the carrying of firearms during the election period.

The INQUIRER learned that

about two years ago, Hernandez was dismissed from the service after a case of obstruction of justice was filed against him for letting Jackelyn out of prison while the latter was awaiting trial on charges of violating anti-illegal drugs law.

Dick Fontanilla, National Police Commission Camarines Norte head, said Hernandez appealed for reinstatement but it was not granted.

He also said Hernandez had been in the police force for about 21 years. **Joyce Mejillano, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau**

Cebu cop linked to drug trade held for gun ban offense

DUMAGUETE CITY—Authorities arrested on Wednesday a Cebu-based police officer on Mabini Street, Barangay 2, this city for violating the gun ban imposed by the Commission on Elections (Comelec).

PO1 Roderick Galo was detained at the Dumaguete police station, pending the filing of a

complaint of illegal possession of firearms in relation to the Omnibus Election Code were being readied.

Galo, a native of Danao City, Cebu, claimed to be assigned at the Police Regional Office in Cebu City. But he lived in Barangay Ajong, Sibulan town, about 6 km north of here.

Supt. Constantino Barot Jr., Dumaguete police chief, said they received a tip from a civilian informant that an armed person was collecting protection money from drug traders in Barangay Looc and was dropping the name of Senior Insp. Reynaldo Andot, Galo's brother-in-law.

Barot, however, said the au-

thorities failed to catch the suspect in the act of collecting money from drug traders.

But they allegedly found a .45 cal. pistol in Galo's possession in violation of the Comelec gun ban.

Galo was held as a result of the gun ban violation. **Romy Amardo, PDI Visayas Bureau**

Bird's nest gatherers arrested in raid in Palawan

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—Armed elements of the Philippine National Police-Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (PNP-CIDG) and the Philippine Navy (PN), together with the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD), raided the Elephant Island here Saturday and arrested about 70 edible bird's nest gatherers and watchers.

The 70 gatherers and watchers were taken to a Philippine Navy boat and brought to Puerto Princesa City. They were charged with violating forestry laws.

Elephant Island is one of the islands in Taytay that has caves where expensive edible bird's

nests are gathered.

The nest from a locally known bird *Balinasayaw* is popular in Chinese restaurants, especially abroad.

The gatherers, however, said the raiders harassed them by firing at them upon reaching the island without warning.

Small boats owned by the gatherers bore bullet holes allegedly from the firearms of the CIDG and the Navy men, according to Mayor Roberto Rodriguez of Taytay town in Palawan, where the raided island is located.

Rodriguez said the act was uncalled for if the agencies would just like to implement Republic Act 9072 or the Na-

tional Caves and Cave Resources Management and Protection Act.

"It is clear that they harassed these poor people. We are being bullied here. It is a big insult," he said.

Because of RA 9072, the management of the caves was transferred from local government units to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, except for Palawan.

According to PCSD, it was just implementing RA 9072 as mandated by the new law.

It said it sought the help of the CIDG and the Navy to assist them.

But Rodriguez said PCSD has no right to encroach on the

island because they believe that it is owned by the municipality.

Taytay derives about P2.5 million a year from edible bird's nest gathering permits.

"We don't want it to be turned over to PCSD because we also have a power and right under the Local Government Code," Rodriguez said.

Before the raid, Rodriguez and other municipal mayors appealed to PCSD to defer the enforcement of the implementing rules and regulations of RA 9072.

He argued that this law would take away income from the LGUs.

The League of Municipalities

in Palawan also opposed the implementation by PCSD through a position paper it submitted to PCSD.

"If there are agencies more concerned with the protection of the caves, these are the local government units," Rodriguez said.

The PCSD said it had given Taytay town enough time to follow the law but it received information that gathering of edible bird's nest was still ongoing on the island so they were forced to act swiftly.

PCSD also confiscated from the gatherers a chainsaw and 11 motorized bancas. **Jofelle Tesorio, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau**

GMA names new M'danao execs

COTABATO CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo appointed former Cotabato City Mayor Virgilio Leyretana as acting executive director of the Mindanao Peace and Development Fund (MPDF).

The MPDF has parallel functions to those of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao's Social Fund Office (ARMM-Social Fund) in other Mindanao provinces.

MPDF replaced the defunct Southern Philippines Development Authority. The MPDF shall promote the development of the conflict-affected areas outside the ARMM.

Leyretana is a former mayor, vice mayor and councilor of this city and held such elective positions in the last three decades.

The President also named Presidential Assistant for Mindanao Development Jesus Dureza, in concurrent capacity as board chair of the MPDF, and former Immaculate Conception Parish Priest Colin Bagafora as board vice chair, representing the private sector. **Nash Maulana, PDI Mindanao Bureau**

Search continues for 18 RP seamen

From page A1

24 hours after the Bow Mariner made its distress call—and would send a plane on Monday morning to decide whether to resume searching, Chief Warrant Officer Gene Maestas said.

Two Coast Guard patrol boats along with a C-130 airplane and a helicopter conducted Sunday's search 80 km off Virginia's Eastern Shore, where the 171-meter tanker sank about 60 meters to the ocean's bottom.

Six crewmen, all Filipinos, were rescued. Three dead crewmen were recovered after the explosion on Saturday night. The ship had a crew of 24 Filipinos and three Greeks.

In Manila, the Department of Labor and Employment identified the six Filipino survivors rescued as Edimar Aguilar, first assistant marine engineer officer; James Bacat, electrician; Dominador Marantes, chief steward; Lugen Ortiliano, third marine officer; Ramon Ronquillo, able seaman; and Reynaldo Tagle, messman.

No confirmation

Julia Heidemann, spokesperson for the Department of Foreign Affairs, said a report by a Philippine official in the United States, First Secretary and Consul Henry Bensurto Jr., had indicated there was no confirmation yet a Filipino had died in the explosion.

An Agence France Presse report quoted Heidemann as saying on Sunday that two of the fatalities were Filipinos.

On Monday, however, Heidemann said the DFA had difficulty obtaining an accurate report on the ship explosion because the Philippines had no consulate in Virginia.

She said Bensurto had to travel four hours from the Philippine Embassy in Washington D.C. to Norfolk, Virginia, to coordinate with US rescuers and visit the injured Filipino seamen at a hospital.

"Realistically, the longer the search goes on, the less likely it is that we will find anyone who is still alive," Rear Adm. Sally Brice-O'Hara, a Coast Guard commander, said at a news briefing in Virginia.

With the water temperature at 7 degrees Celsius, a person could



RESCUE personnel wheel a victim of the tanker explosion into the Norfolk Sentara General Hospital's emergency room in Virginia.

survive several hours depending on health and survival gear, Brice-O'Hara said.

The six Filipino survivors were pulled from a life raft within three hours of the accident and flown to the Sentara Norfolk General Hospital. All were treated for conditions, including hypothermia, and had to be decontaminated because they were covered with oil.

Three survivors were in good condition at the hospital and could be released Monday morning, according to a hospital spokesperson. Three others were released Sunday morning.

"They look like they've been through an ordeal and they're very introspective about what happened," hospital spokesperson Vicky Gray said of the rescued crewmen. "They're very quiet, subdued, like you would expect."

Rescue basket

A Coast Guard helicopter lowered a rescue basket to the life raft, but the Filipino crewmen made no move to get in it. Dave Foreman, a rescue swimmer, was then lowered into the water and he pulled the crewmen into the basket one by one.

The ocean reeked of ethanol as Foreman was lowered 22.5 meters from a Coast Guard helicopter to the life raft. Empty life vests, their rescue strobes still flashing, were scattered on the water, but even with the light Foreman had trouble making out the figures on the raft. They were

so covered in fuel oil from the tanker not even the whites of their eyes were visible.

"It was something you would see in one of those horror movies, like 'Swamp Thing,'" Foreman said. He groped about for the survivors, then dragged and pulled them into his rescue basket, struggling to get a good grip on their oil-slicked bodies. One at a time, the men were hoisted to the HH-60 helicopter.

Sam Pulliam, the helicopter's flight mechanic, said the air became so thick with oil fumes it was hard to breathe.

The survivors spoke little English but gestured with their hands, Pulliam said. "They were all very, very, very cold. They just wanted some blankets."

The survivors declined requests for interviews.

The helicopter's pilot, Lt. Eric Bader, said the men may have been reluctant to get into the rescue basket on their own because they were scared or didn't want to leave their shipmates behind.

"I was basically thinking there were other people out there," Foreman said. "That's the mentality of a rescue swimmer—he wants to save everybody."

Hospital chaplains helped crew members talk to their families in the Philippines by telephone.

Emergency call

The Bow Mariner was traveling from New York to Houston when it made an emergency call just after

6 p.m. that there had been an explosion, Coast Guard officials said.

Lt. Chris Shaffer of Ocean City (Maryland) Emergency Services said the explosion came after a fire started on the ship's deck.

The Singapore-flagged ship, a chemical tanker built in 1982, is managed by a Greek company, Ceres Hellenic Shipping Enterprises Ltd.

The Bow Mariner underwent two routine inspections in 2003, Ceres Hellenic said in a statement on Sunday. No problems were found in January, and five minor deficiencies were found in October, including a defective crew shower and the need to update a log book. The issues were corrected and the ship sailed without delay, the company said.

It was unclear how much ethanol spilled into the ocean, but Coast Guard officials said the substance would largely dissipate at sea with minor environmental impact. Fuel from the tanker that spilled when the ship sank also was dissipating, a Coast Guard spokesperson said.

Tony Redding, spokesperson for Ceres Hellenic, said the company was sending a technical crew from Greece on Sunday to assist the US Coast Guard, Redding said.

A spokesperson for Norway-based Odjell, the commercial operator and owner of the ship, declined to speculate on what caused the accident.

The Coast Guard will investigate the accident, which occurred in international waters. **Reports from AP and Jerome Aning**

Abu names ship bomber

From page A1

jured had suffered any shrapnel wounds."

What happened to SuperFerry 14 was simple "human error" and "not a terroristic act," Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Roy Kyamko said.

"Initial results of the investigation on the said boat showed no sign of any bomb material. There was no bomb material inside that supposed cabin," Kyamko told the INQUIRER in Zamboanga City.

"They (investigators) did not find shrapnel, no twisted iron, no explosives residue or related items that will tend to lead that there were bombs or improvised explosive devices that could have started the fire aboard the SuperFerry 14," he said.

Kyamko said Abu Sayyaf spokesperson Abu Soliman, who claimed Sunday that the extremist group was responsible for the explosion, "might just want to ride on the propaganda that they are still strong and a force to reckon with."

President Macapagal-Arroyo said on Sunday that allegations that terrorists were behind the disaster had come from pranksters. She, nevertheless, ordered tighter security at seaports.

"Tight security in our ports will be maintained to effectively screen out terrorists or bombs from our ships," she said in a statement.

Lax security

"Do they want to know how it happened?" Janjalani said. "I can describe to you the physical structure of SuperFerry 14."

"Before the escalator, there was a guard in black uniform without a dog. After the escalator, one can go straight to the Blue Room. It was a tourist class that can accommodate 24 passengers. Passenger 51 is assigned to double deck. Beside the Blue Room was an exit," was Janjalani's description of the room where Alvarado exploded the bomb.

Above the Blue Room was the eatery where a live band played, according to the Abu Sayyaf chief.

Janjalani said he learned about the Blue Room because he had ridden another SuperFerry. But he said he got the actual description of SuperFerry 14 from the bomber.

"First he said on the phone, 'Salam! (peace)'. He spoke about how he got in because the security measures were not strict. Then he said, 'Yakap-yakap ko, ready na ako, mauna na raw siya (I'm embracing [it] and I'm ready. I'll go ahead),' narrated Janjalani.

Asked what Alvarado meant by "I'll go ahead," Janjalani said Passenger 51 would go ahead to heaven as a martyr "mujahideen" (freedom fighter).

Spiritual course

Janjalani claimed that Passenger 51 was ripe for the mission because the alleged bomber had just finished a rigorous spiritual course called the "Amaliya Istish-hadiya."

"Amaliya" is Arabic for operation and "istish-hadiya" means to seek martyrdom through death, according to the Abu Sayyaf chief.

"A select number of men and women had volunteered to undergo that course and Alvarado was just one of the pioneer students," he said.

Who taught them to do that? "I did," Janjalani said, stressing that he was the training director of the course.

He said he himself was willing to undertake a suicide mission. "We will all have our turn," he said on the phone.

Soliman said the Abu Sayyaf had consolidated its forces. "All real freedom fighters in Mindanao from various groups are involved in this operation."

Asked if he was referring to the reported buildup of forces by the Asian wing of al-Qaida, the Jamaah Islamiyah, Soliman said it was Ahai (Al-Harakatul Al-Islamia, also known as the Abu Sayyaf), not the JI.

"In the Philippines, it's Ahai," he said.

He said the Abu Sayyaf had just wrapped up another course in Mindanao. The course involved CQB (Close-Quarter Battle) and FBUA (Fighting-In-Build-Up Operations).

Asked whether the Abu Sayyaf was getting help from foreign groups, Soliman said, "We have supporters. Ahai is supported."

With reports from Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau and AFP

134 still missing; survivors found in hotel

From page A1

pered search and rescue efforts.

He said charred wood and metal had accumulated in one-third of the A-deck when the ship tilted on its starboard side.

"We would have to sift through the debris," he said.

Most of the missing passengers had been staying in the tourist and cabin sections on the A-deck, according to their families.

The explosion that triggered the fire occurred in the tourist section, according to survivors. "That is where we are concentrating now," Gosigan said.

He did not discount the possibility that the bodies of the missing passengers could have been trapped under the debris.

Dentures, black belt

Search and rescue teams from the PCG were unable to enter the cargo hold because of the smoke emanating from the area.

But teams from the PCG, the police and the Bureau of Fire Protection were able to enter the rest of the ship, especially the dry sections. Divers were able to inspect the submerged cabins, but still no bodies were found.

In all, 18 divers from the PCG,

16 personnel from the BFP, six members of the crime scene investigation team and four arson investigators inspected the ship, according to Gosigan.

Dentures, a black belt, a red trash can and five travel bags, among other things, were recovered from the scene and brought to PCG headquarters in Manila.

Gosigan said search and rescue operations would continue probably until Sunday.

Prayers

In Bacolod City, Bishop Vicente Navarra has called for prayers for the victims of the disaster.

"Feb. 27 is indeed a day which caused us sadness, especially to the victims and their families whose experience is truly painful and traumatic," the bishop said.

He expressed sympathy to the victims and their families, as well as the management of the SuperFerry 14, saying the incident was a "tragic event, which we never expected to happen."

"In the spirit of communion and compassion, I share with everyone who suffers and in tormented gravity the damage it brings," Navarra said.

"It is my fervent prayer and hope that such an experience is healed and life will continue its normal course," he added.

He also called on the management to help the families look for their relatives to ease their long wait.

A total of 298 Negrenses were on board the ship. Twelve children and 193 adults were on the survivors' list.

Ninety-three others remain missing.

Many of those missing from Negros Occidental were believed to have been trapped inside the boat's tourist section.

Day of sadness

In Iligan City, the schools division office of the Department of Education declared yesterday "a day of sadness and prayer" for its three officials, a teacher and a senior high school student who were among the missing.

Sparing a day's class session, all elementary and secondary schools in the city prayed and hoped that Superintendents Leonor Leyco and Myrna Buhia and Medical Officer Adela Sabuero were still alive.

The three had accompanied seven students and eight teachers to the writing contest for high school students in Sta. Cruz, Laguna.

Of the seven students, only

Pregnant teacher from Iligan City recounts ordeal

By Romulo Ponte

PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

BAY, Laguna—A pregnant teacher, who was among the three badly injured survivors of the SuperFerry 14 fire, said she forgot about the baby in her womb and her own safety to ensure that the schoolchildren under her care were rescued.

Ludivina Carrasco of Iligan City is now confined at the Manila Doctors Hospital with two other passengers. She suffered injuries all over her body.

Felicitas Coniconde, schools supervisor of the Department of Education in the District of Bay, quoted the teacher as saying: "I totally forgot myself and the safety of my baby inside my womb just to make sure that the students I am responsible for were brought to safety."

The teacher, according to Coniconde, said she herself could not believe what she had done during the fire that struck SuperFerry 14 in the middle of the night.

Coniconde said she was deeply moved as the teacher related her ordeal.

She said she was proud of the heroic deed of the frail but brave mentor who was willing to sacrifice her life and her ba-

by for others.

Coniconde told the INQUIRER that she praised the teacher for her exemplary action. She said she would be willing to recommend her for an award to recognize her heroism.

The supervisor said that as of Sunday, there were 16 confirmed missing supervisors, teachers and students. They had just attended the two-day National Schools Press Conference, a writing contest for high school students, in Sta. Cruz, Laguna.

Ten of the missing were from Misamis Oriental. The six others were from Iligan.

Coniconde said 342 registered delegates from Region 10 were billeted at the Bay Elementary School.

Of those who boarded the boat, 122 were confirmed to have been rescued. Ninety-nine of the delegates, whose return trip was delayed, were persuaded to take the plane for their return home.

The transportation of the delegates to the airport was paid for by Department of Education Division Office in Laguna, through Dr. Lilia P. Reyes, the schools division superintendent.



RELATIVES of the SuperFerry 14 passengers who are still missing keep vigil outside the Coast Guard headquarters, hoping to receive information about search and rescue operations.

ERIK ARAZAS

Rodel Filipinas, a senior student of the Integrated Developmental High School of the Mindanao State University-Iligan Institute of Technology, had yet to be accounted for, together with his coach Daisy Atienza, an English teacher.

"Today is a sad day for Iligan City, but all of us have remained prayerful and hopeful. Until such

time that they are confirmed dead, then we will declare a day of mourning," said May Barga, an education supervisor, correcting the local TV station which used the word "mourning" instead of "prayer and hope." With reports from Carla P. Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau, and Jeffrey Maningo, PDI Mindanao Bureau

'Return ... Oscar losers get \$110,000 worth of gifts

From page A1

ported us have seen past the trolls and the wizards and the hobbits in recognizing fantasy this year," said Jackson, who just a few years ago was an obscure New Zealander known mainly for an admired art-house film ("Heavenly Creatures"), a run-of-the-mill Hollywood horror tale ("The Frighteners") and a scattering of cult splatter flicks ("Bad Taste," and "Meet the Feebles").

Other top Oscars played out predictably, with front-runners claiming all four acting trophies—the first for each.

Sean Penn took the best actor prize as a vengeful father in "Mystic River," and South African-born Charlize Theron won for best actress as serial killer Aileen Wuornos in "Monster."

Oscars for supporting performances went to Tim Robbins as a man emotionally hamstrung by childhood trauma in "Mystic River" and Renee Zellweger as a hardy Confederate survivor in "Cold Mountain."

"Return of the King" matched the record 11 Oscar wins of "Titanic" and "Ben-Hur," becoming the third movie to sweep every category in which it was nominated, following "Gigi" and "The Last Emperor," which both went nine-for-nine.

Jackson also shared the adapted screenplay Oscar with co-writers Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens.

The 42-year-old writer-director thanked "our wonderful cast who just got their tongues around this rather awkward text and made it come to life with such devotion and passion and heart."

"Return of the King" also won for song, musical score, visual effects, editing, makeup, art direction, costume design and sound mixing.

Penn, Theron

Penn, who skipped the Oscars when previously nominated for "Dead Man Walking," "Sweet and Lowdown" and "I Am Sam," showed up and accepted graciously—although he made a crack about there being no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

Dismissive of awards in the past, Penn missed last month's Golden Globes but made a point to attend other Oscar and awards functions.

"If there's one thing that actors know, other than there weren't any WMDs, it's that there is no such thing as best in acting. And that's proven by these great actors that I was nominated with," said Penn, who received a standing ovation.

In "Monster," Theron was virtually unrecognizable, packing on 13.5 kg (30 lb) and concealing her cover-girl beauty behind false teeth, spotty makeup and dark contact lenses.

"I know everybody in New Zealand's been thanked, so I'm going to thank everybody in South Africa, my home country," said Theron, who had been generally regarded as a lightweight actress before "Monster." Her earlier credits include "The Cider House Rules," last summer's heist caper "The Italian Job" and such flops as "Reindeer Games" and "Sweet November."

Coppola

Sofia Coppola's Oscar victory for original screenplay for "Lost in Translation" made her family the second clan of three-generation Oscar winners, joining Walter, John and Anjelica Huston. Her father is five-time Oscar winner Francis Ford Coppola, who was an executive producer of "Lost in Translation." Her grandfather, Carmine Coppola, won for musical score on "The Godfather Part II."

"Thank you to my dad for everything he taught me," Coppola said. "Thank you to my brother Roman and all my friends who were there for me when I was stuck at 12 pages and encouraged me to keep writing."

Only a handful of fantasy films have been nominated for the top Oscar—"The Fellowship of the Ring" and "The Two Towers" among them—but none had won until now.

High camp

At best, the genre was viewed as high camp—not the stuff of Oscars which usually go to grand dramas with their feet firmly planted in recognizable reality.

The people behind "The Lord of the Rings" changed that, approaching Tolkien's mythical realm with dead seriousness. Jackson sought three-dimensional humanity all around—compassion, nobility and self-doubt in heroic hobbit Frodo (Elijah Wood), wizard Gandalf (Ian McKellen) and human Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen), covetousness and Shakespearean malice in villains Saruman (Christopher Lee) and Gollum (a computer-generated creature voiced by Andy Serkis).

Audiences received Jackson's fantastical creation with equal seriousness, with global ticket sales of \$2.8 billion for the three films. "Return of the King" has topped \$1 billion alone, the No. 2 box-office draw behind "Titanic" at \$1.8 billion.

Jackson labored for seven years to adapt Tolkien's trilogy—first persuading Hollywood bankers to stake him to the tune of \$300 million, then marshaling a cast and crew of 2,000 to shoot the three films and land them in theaters just a year apart.

The result was a 9 1/2-hour saga—more than 11 hours once all three extended home-video versions are available—that seamlessly blended live action and computer animation. Real actors credibly shared the screen with flying beasts, hulking trolls, and walking, talking "tree shepherds."

Other "Return of the King" winners included composer Howard Shore, who took his second Oscar for writing "Lord of the Rings" music, having won two years ago on Part 1 of the saga, "The Fellowship of the Ring."

"Into the West," the wistful tune of farewell from "Return of the King," won the best-song Oscar. The song was written by Fran Walsh, the film's co-screenwriter; Howard Shore, its music composer; and Annie Lennox, who sings the tune. AP

From page A1

year's haul of loot are being kept under wraps, each nominee, presenter and performer will walk off with a hefty consignment of gifts worth around \$110,000, according to reports.

The stars who will take home the gifts include last year's best actress winner Nicole Kidman, her superstar ex-husband Tom Cruise, John Travolta, director Steven Spielberg, "Pretty Woman" Julia

Roberts, Renee Zellweger and best actress nominee and presenter Charlize Theron.

Gifts to the presenters will include a seven-day, all-expense paid sea cruise in the Mediterranean or the Caribbean, business class air tickets from Los Angeles to Auckland, New Zealand, luxury hotel stays and a \$1,500 dinner for two at a world-class steak-house, according to USA Today.

Also featuring in the hard-to-carry booty is a giant \$6,000 television set

and a \$500 espresso machine for an elite group of people who either have or can afford the items anyway.

Last year, the stars needed the help of their burly minders to cart off their hefty wicker goody baskets, worth around \$20,000, to their waiting limos.

That haul included a diamond-encrusted bra worth \$5,000 for each of the best actress nominees, designer clothes, a mattress, cameras, mobile phones, luxu-

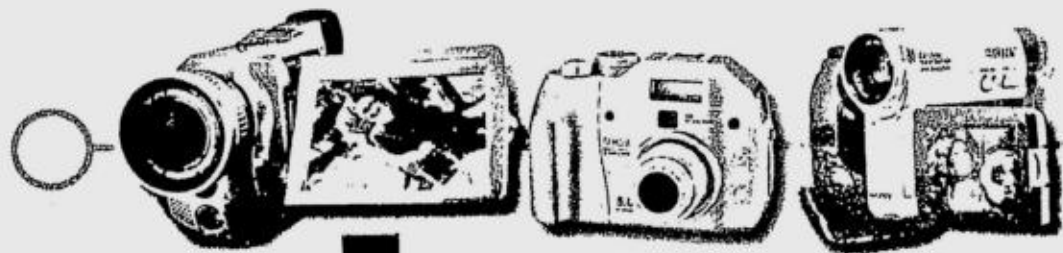
ry beauty and spa treatments and expensive diamond-inlaid watches.

The Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences assembles the traditional gift baskets from thousands of products and services sent by firms keen to get an Oscar endorsement and have stars use their goods.

But those companies whose goods were not picked for the official selection are giving them anyway, boosting the value of each gift basket even higher. AFP

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LAURO Vizconde awaits final justice in the murder 13 years ago of his loved ones (shown in portrait), wife Estrellita and daughters, Ma. Carmela and Anna Marie Jennifer.

ERNIE U. SARMIENTO

Vizconde triumph has just begun

From page A1

mer Sen. Freddie Webb, and include other sons of similarly wealthy families.

"I have learned to forgive them. I can sleep soundly now," Vizconde said. "But I will only have closure when the Supreme Court affirms the decision. That's when I am fully vindicated."

After finding out that the convicts' families, particularly the Webbs, continue to tell media that Hubert et al. are innocent, Vizconde, who is totally convinced of their guilt, said: "They're lucky because they can still visit Hubert (in prison). Me? I can only visit my family in the cemetery."

Vizconde continues to help relatives of heinous crime victims keep vigil on the often

painfully slow justice system.

"I don't want others to go through what I did," he said. He wasn't referring to the gruesome crime, but the "feeling of helplessness when all I got was lip service (from officials) who handled the initial investigation."

Banded together

Two sets of suspects were charged in court and then cleared for lack of evidence. Later, Webb and company were arrested in 1995—four years after the tragedy. The trial took another five years.

By then, an impatient Vizconde and other aggrieved parties in high-profile crimes have banded together for a common cause—to closely monitor and draw public attention to the progress of their cases.

Today, Vizconde chairs the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption, a group that counts 5,000 members in Metro Manila and keeps watch on some 3,000 cases criminal cases pending before police investigation desks or the courts.

The VACC's work is not just about giving legal support. It also provides emotional and psychological help to members still reeling from the violence and the trauma. Seminars on how to cope are regularly offered with Vizconde among the main speakers.

When he guested in a talk show on RPN 9 last Friday, Vizconde announced the VACC contact numbers and his personal mobile phone number. Within seconds, his phone started beeping with numerous text messages.

Learning to cope

After years of speaking to media and relatives of heinous crime victims, Vizconde has become a sort of grief management guru.

He talks openly about his family, the good times, his suicidal moments, and the sensational crime itself. He said this has helped him to cope.

While others would rather forget, he gave the INQUIRER a "tour" of the crime scene—the master bedroom where his wife and two daughters were stabbed.

"This is the electric fan whose cable was cut and used (by the attackers) to hogtie my wife and Carmela," he began. He walked to a corner and pointed to a spot on the parquet floor. "And this is where she was raped," he said, voice totally without emotion.

The adjacent bedrooms of Carmela and Jennifer remain the same—looking like shrines to their abruptly ended youth. The two girls' assorted stuffed toys sit on neatly made beds. A corner shelf keeps Carmela's yellowed college textbooks and papers (she was a graduating psychology student), cassette tapes and a deck of playing cards.

Except for the bloodstained matrimonial bed, Mang Lauro has not removed or replaced an item in the three rooms, down to the beddings (which are washed monthly) and furniture.

The tour would not be complete without Vizconde mentioning the "strange phenomena" in the house, especially during the first few months after the murders.

There's the self-clicking doorknob in Jennifer's room, the self-lighting candles at the altar in the master bedroom, and the air-conditioning unit which would turn itself on although the bedroom was locked.

Mang Lauro's lone home companion since 1994 is a house help who is also a distant relative. "She's quite brave," he said.

Did the strange incidents scare him? "They were probably messages for me," he said.

Divine intervention

It's not the eerie encounters which tormented him during that difficult time, rather, it was his dark, vengeful thoughts.

"I tried to commit suicide. But when I was about to do it, someone rang the doorbell. I think it was one of my siblings," he recalled. He attributed the visitor's timely arrival to divine intervention.

At the height of his rage, he thought of buying high-powered firearms and taking matters into his own hands. "Again, somebody stopped me," he said.

Then there were "calls" from people who introduced themselves as members of the communist hit squad Alex Boncayao Brigade and the New People's Army.

They offered to carry out a vendetta and repeatedly asked for his go-signal.

"I just said 'thank you' for the gesture," he narrated.

One ABB member even called a radio station and asked to meet with him. The station phoned Vizconde but he declined the offer on-air.

Mang Lauro has told and retold his tragic story and given words of encouragement to people who have lost their loved ones to crime. For this, he has received 20 citations and plaques from various civic organizations. They're displayed alongside his family memorabilia.

With his flourishing profession, his tireless promotion of the VACC, and a fresh coat of paint on his house, Vizconde's triumph over tragedy has just begun.

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Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

MEGALOTTO 6/45

11 20 26 38 40 42

5 profs in thesis-for-a-fee scam told to quit

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

FIVE professors who have been implicated in a thesis-for-a-fee scam by their students have been told to resign "voluntarily" by school officials.

In a report dated Feb. 21, 2004, officials of the University of Perpetual Help in Molino, Bacoor, Cavite, found that the professors had demanded money from their students in exchange for doing their thesis for them.

Those asked to resign were Ramon Sapina, Ferdinand Legaspi, Clandestine Claro, Joseph Sabusap and Michael Roman.

The report said Sapina, Legaspi and Claro were found to be directly involved in demanding and collecting money from students.

Legaspi and Claro had already resigned. Sapina, Sabusap and Roman were asked to stay on until the end of the semester so there would be no disruption in their classes.

The report was signed by school director Gloria Alberto, computer studies dean Rosalie Armando, and lawyer Amador Magdamit Jr.

The scam was reported to school authorities

5 PROFS/A19



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Makati bus robbers rounded up

ON THE same day the police arrested two men for robbing and killing a University of the Philippines coed in Manila, suspected members of a bus robbery gang were rounded up in Makati City.

According to SPO4 Ricardo Reyes, suspects Alfredo Baluyot, a former bus driver, Leopoldo Mendoza, a former bus conductor, and Nadie Gonzales, 31, a former bus inspector, hit a JMK Transit plying on Edsa in Makati at 10:40 p.m.

Baluyot and Mendoza were arrested by patrolling lawmen as soon as they alighted from the bus near Estrella Street. Gonzales was arrested in a follow-up operation in Bulacan.

In Manila, one of the suspects who robbed and killed UP Manila Pharmacy student Mary Joyce Lattao, 19, yesterday was identified as the same man who robbed and killed Danilo Liwanag, 37, in March last year.

According to a witness, suspect Ricardo Marzo, 33, shot and killed Liwanag when the victim refused to give his belongings during a robbery in Sampaloc, Manila, said Senior Insp. Alejandro Yanquiling.

Marzo and his brother, Francisco, were arrested in Sampaloc on Sunday for allegedly shooting Lattao during a robbery, police said.

Margaux Ortiz, Leila Salaverria

Tanong Bayan 10pm, M-F, ABC-5

Meron nga bang "religious vote"?

- A. WALA. Hindi organisado ang mga simbahan at sekta.
- B. MERON. Lalo na ang mga charismatic groups.
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- D. DI KO ALAM. Magdadalas muna ako.

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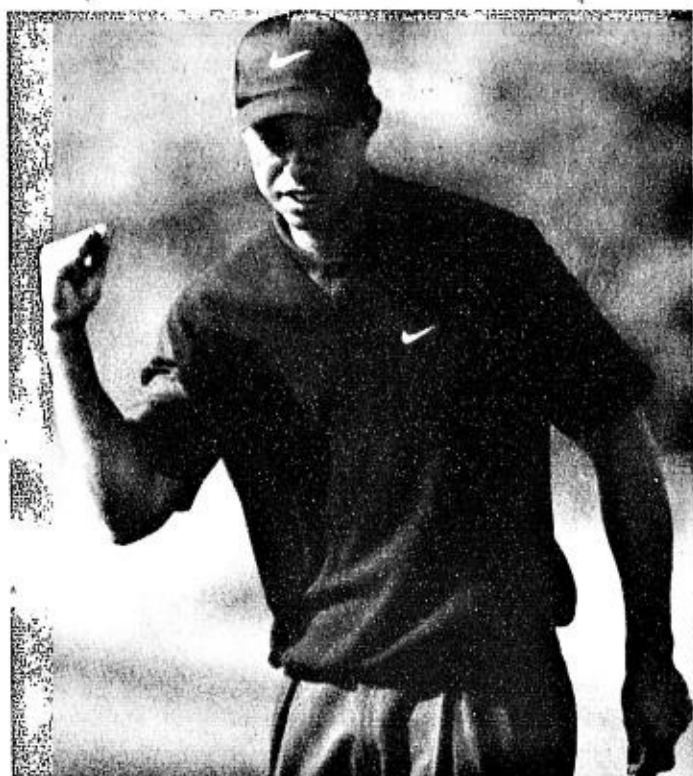
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SPORTS

Editor Teddyvic S. Melendres
Assistant Editor Edwin M. Villanueva



ON TOP OF WORLD
A PUMPED-UP Woods (left) celebrates capturing the 16th hole. He beat Love, 3 and 2, in their showdown in the Accenture World Golf Championship Sunday in Carlsbad, California.

REUTERS

MATCH PLAY KING

Taut Tiger puts Love away with hot putter

CARLSBAD, California—Tiger Woods simply has no match.

Spraying his tee shots all over the course, a tense Woods went 25 holes before he finally took the lead Sunday, then roared past Davis Love III with key putts to win the Match Play Championship for the second straight year, 3 and 2.

"I was in quite a few places where I was in trouble," Woods said. "The good ol' flat stick is the great equalizer."

Woods won for the 40th time on the PGA Tour in just his 149th start, the quickest anyone has reached that milestone. Jack Nicklaus played 221 events before he won his 40th tournament.

Woods earned \$1.2 million, the biggest first prize ever on the PGA Tour, and reminded everyone who's No. 1 in the world.

He won for the eighth time in the 14 official World Golf Championships he has played.

Even more impressive is his back-to-back victories in the Accenture Match Play Championship, the most unpredictable format in golf because of the five 18-hole matches required to get to the finals.

Woods thrives on this format.

"Right from the first tee, it's eyeball-to-eyeball," he said. "That to me is a great rush."

His amateur record was among the best ever—three straight US Junior Amateurs, followed by three straight US Amateur titles. His professional record is starting to catch up, now 20-3 in this event.

His game wasn't sharp Sunday, but Love helped make sure that wasn't a factor by missing a half-dozen putts inside 10 feet.

"He was missing fairways the first 18 holes, and I let him get away with it," Love said. "I just didn't have it on the greens."

He also had to deal with a heckler who let out a "Whoop!" when Love missed a par putt on the 20th hole that squared the match.

The fan started saying, "No Love!" as Love stepped to his ball on the fifth tee. He sought out the fan and said, "We're not leaving until he's out of here."

They got the fan out of there—and it wasn't long before Woods took Love out of the match.

Woods couldn't find a fairway in the morning session and was lucky to be only one down after the first 18 holes. Woods had to save par from behind the first green when the afternoon session began, squared the match when Love missed the second green and made bogey, and then it was a matter of who would take control.

The odds were on Woods, although no one could have guessed it would happen on No. 7.

Woods shoved another drive into the deep rough, behind two trees with a small gap between the branches. Woods took a mighty swing with a wedge from 158 yards and didn't see the ball until it dropped behind the flag, stopping 12 feet away against the fringe.

Caddie Steve Williams reached out to take the club, and Woods gave him a fist-tap, removed his cap, then closed his eyes and exhaled as he slowly placed the cap back on his head.

The birdie gave him a 1-up lead, and Woods found an extra gear. AP

Interclub skippers plan strategies

CAGAYAN DE ORO—As easy as Luisita took its fifth straight title last week, Canlubang is expected to face meager opposition in its own bid for a "high five" and 13th overall title when the 56th PAL Interclub golf tournament gets going tomorrow in two venues here.

With Juvic Pagunsan, who re-

cently finished a strong second to American Edward Michaels in the recent Philippine Open at Riviera at the forefront, the Sweeties are deemed too strong and too talented for the championship field.

His backup crew includes Canlubang stalwarts Tommy

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A JUBILANT Reyes lifts his trophy after beating Kiamko in the finals.

NCR squads whip Students rivals

LUCENA CITY—Three-time champion University of Manila led the march of the favorites as it whipped City College of Taguig, 114-61, yesterday at the start of the 58th National Students Basketball Championship at the Quezon Convention Center here.

Jovit Gomez led four other Hawks in double figures with 29 points as UM dominated the smaller and erratic Taguig dribblers.

"It's still a long way to go," said UM mentor Loreto Tolentino, who steered the Hawks to the 1993, 1995 and 1999 national titles.

Earlier, Philippine Maritime Institute and University of Perpetual Help of Rizal routed

their opponents as the NCR qualifiers made their presence felt in the tournament featuring the country's best school teams.

PMI, winner of the NCR qualifying, dumped Urios College, 84-62, while the UPHR Alas whipped University of Luzon, 94-49, to jumpstart their respective bids in the tournament organized by the BAP in cooperation with the Quezon provincial government headed by Gov. Willie Enverga and Lucena Mayor Ramon Talaga.

Niño Marquez and Larry Rodriguez combined for 43 points for the NCR champions in the event supported by Burlington, Absolute Distilled Water, Cebuana Lhuillier, Federal Ex-

press, Healthy Options, Molten, YKL Color Films and the Philippine Sports Commission.

Over at the Enverga University, many-time champions San Beda Red Cubs whipped Ateneo de Davao, 92-53, to start their title-retention bid on a high note in the high school division.

Scores:

UPHR 94—Bauzon 24, Javier 13, Refuerza 11, Joa 10, Hawkins 7, Balboa 6, Quizon 4, Misa 4, Santos 4, Mendoza 3, Cuenco 3.

UNIV. OF LUZON 49—Ico 10, Marinas 8, Salango 6, Bucao 4, Velasco 4, Ruiz 4, Nativio 3, Gamas 3, Ayson 2, De Leon 2, Galvan 2, De Vera 1.

Halftime: 48-27

Bata routs Kiamko for Asian 9-ball title

SINGAPORE—The magic was still there and so was the spell.

Efren "Bata" Reyes reasserted his dominance of Warren Kiamko, 11-4, Sunday to win his second straight leg title and extend his compatriot's misfortunes in the San Miguel Asian 9-Ball Tour at the Pool Haven in Clarke Quay here.

"Hawak ko talaga ang numero ni Warren. Kita niyo naman ang dami niyang mintis na simpleng tira (I've got Warren's number. You saw how he missed a lot of easy shots)," Reyes said after receiving his trophy and the US\$10,000 top prize.

The spell surfaced early as Kiamko bungled several gimmies in the first six frames, the most crucial of which was a textbook straightforward shot on the two-ball in the sixth that allowed Reyes to clean up and grab a 4-2 lead.

There was no stopping the "Magician" from there as Reyes, seemingly enjoying the all-Filipino final, pocketed one spectacular shot after another to post an imposing 7-2 lead.

Kiamko, who trailed by the same score in a win over Korean Jeong Young Hwa in the quarters, cleaned up the next frame—thanks to a rare foul shot by Reyes.

But the Filipino Billiards Congress of America Hall of Famer came right back. He closed the

match by taking four of the next five racks.

"Wala ng gaanong pressure kapag kapwa mo Pinoy ang kalaban mo. (The pressure is gone when you're facing a compatriot)," Reyes said.

Reyes and company never felt away from home in the tournament as Filipinos, led by sports patron Aristeo "Putch" Puyat cheered them from the gallery. There were even some waving a Philippine flag every time a Filipino won a match.

"Nag-enjoy ako sa panonood kahit one-sided ang resulta (I enjoyed the match even though it was one-sided)," said Puyat, the Filipino pool stars' main benefactor.

Reyes' win pushed his tour-leading earnings to US\$30,750, while Kiamko, runner up for the third straight time, maintained second place with about US\$20,000.

The Filipino champion also garnered 70 qualifying points for the World Pool Championship to be hosted by Taiwan in July. Kiamko got 50 qualifying points.



BARANGAY Ginebra's Mark Caguioa is pinned between Purefoods' Kerby Raymundo (left) and James Yap during a loose ball scramble in the game Sunday. Ginebra won, 100-85.

AUGUST DELA CRUZ

Ticket treat for loyal PBA fans

YOU don't want to miss your favorite team's game?

Here's good news. The Philippine Basketball Association is now offering Team Loyalty Tickets to en-

able fans to watch their favorite team's game live either at Araneta Coliseum or at the PhilSports.

For details, call 911-5555 or the PBA ticketline at 636-5320 to 21.

Interclub skippers plan strategies

From page A21

Manotoc, Dave Hernandez and Abe Rosal.

The tournament officially kicks off today with the hitting of the ceremonial drives by Interclub officials led by Philippine Airlines executive vice president Henry So Uy at the Pueblo de Oro Golf and Club course here.

Joining Uy, also the executive assistant to the chair and chief executive officer Lucio Tan, in the 9 a.m. rites are Rep. Tinnex Jaraula, Del Monte Golf and Country Club vice president Jaime Ong, Del Monte president Rudy Menez and PAL executive Domingo Duerme.

Aside from Pueblo, Del Monte is the other host of what is generally regarded as one of the world's biggest amateur tournaments.

The team captains' meeting will be held at 9:30 a.m. at the Pueblo de Oro clubhouse.

A record international field of 76 squads is competing for team and individual honors in four divisions.

ABS-CBN, Airbus, ASUS Notebook PC, CNN International, GE Aircraft Engines, Golden Nugget Hotel Las Vegas, Johnnie Walker, Manila Broadcasting Corp., Radio Mindanao Network, Royal Caribbean International and UMBN are the tournament's major sponsors.

The corporate sponsors are 105.1 Crossover,



FIVE IN A ROW: Members of the Luisita seniors team take centerstage after capturing its fifth straight title in the Philippine Airlines Interclub golf tournament in Cagayan de Oro City. Joined by PAL executives Henry So Uy, Domingo Duerme and Jing Javier, they are (standing from left) Iggy Clavellia, Lucio Tan, Richie Garcia, team captain Rudy Samson and Alex Montelibano. Front row (same order), King Sumulong, Bong de Guzman, Madoka Amano, Francis Gaston.

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The firepower of Carlubang's traditional rival, Manila Southwoods, has been diminished with the departure of last year's Philippine amateur champion Jerome Delariarte to the pro ranks

Mediatrix five captures NBL Invitational Cup

MEDIATRIX Telecommunications leaned on reserve guard Stephen Mopera at crunch time to turn back Mail & More-Overtime, 72-68, Sunday and lift the National Basketball League Invitational Cup at the CP Tinga Gym in Taguig.

Mopera, the 26-year-old hotshot from General Luna, Quezon, scored only seven points, but five of it came in the last two minutes and proved to be the game's marginal baskets.

For a while, though, the Express seemed all set to snatch the crown following back-to-back twinners by Chris Corbin and Nani Epondulan,

68-65, with 2:11 left.

But Mopera hit a running jumper in the next play to move Mediatrix within one and then hit a three-pointer off a turnover by Mail & More as the Telecoms charged ahead, 70-68, with 74 seconds left.

The Express had two chances to tie the game but failed.

The Telecoms' Junnel Mendiola canned his two charities with no time left to settle the score.

Mendiola was later adjudged as the tourney's most valuable player.

Forward Taguig routed Chosun University, 95-66, for third place.

The conqueror and the conquered

THERE are three basic weapons in golf: driver, iron, putter. You play all three well and you have good chances of winning a tournament.

The game's main three battlefields are the tee box, the fairway and the green. You conquer all three territories and you win the war.

In firing a 5-under-par 66 on Saturday at Riviera, Juvic Pagunsan was hitting his driver and irons well. His putts kept falling like rain in the wettest months of the rainy season.

"I couldn't complain," said Juvic of his tournament-leading third round in the DHL 88th Philippine Open. "Riviera's Langer course has suddenly become as lovable as my LJ." (LJ is Juvic's only child of 1 year and 8 months).

On Sunday, however, golf's greatest weapon—the putter—deserted Juvic.

"I was hitting so many greens," said Juvic. "However, my putts could hardly find the hole."

That cost him the DHL Open crown—a title that would have made him only the second Filipino amateur to win the Philip-

pine Open after Luis "Golem" Silverio.

"Oh, yes, I remember that one," said Bert Bravo of U-Bix Corporation. "The year was 1966. Golem won it by sinking a pressure-packed eight-footer at Wack Wack's 18th hole to beat Tino Tugor by one stroke."

Juvic Pagunsan, 25, shot 9 strokes more than his tournament-best 66 for a closing-day round of 75 to lose the DHL Open by three strokes to Edward Michaels, a 27-year-old qualifier from Atlanta, Georgia.

But if it's any consolation, Juvic Pagunsan became the best-placed Filipino at second in the fabled Open, Asia's oldest professional golf tournament born in 1913.

"I gave it my best shot," said Juvic, who is bound for Rome next month for the World Individual Amateur Championship as part of the six-strong Asian Team. "My putting wasn't there today."

His plus-4 finish gave him a plus-1 total. Michaels, whose wife of eight months, Missy, has caddied for him in the DHL Open, closed out with a 2-under-par 69 to win it by 3 shots with his minus-2 total.

"He (Juvic) is a tough nut to crack," said

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza



Michaels.

But that's a flattery of the first degree. Michaels, lean and tall as singer Don MacLean, is the tougher nut to crack.

After he got cut some three weeks back in the Thailand Open—a misfortune that finally changed his attitude toward the game—Michaels retreated to the driving range. He said he hit ranged balls till his "hands hurt."

Said Missy: "I am his mental coach more than his wife. My training as a swimmer has helped a lot in keeping him focused in his game."

Michaels showed his mental toughness on Sunday. At the par-4 7th, Michaels hit a monster driver that left him only about 70

yards to the green. He dubbed his approach, leaving the ball maybe 40 yards to the pin.

"I told him immediately everybody's entitled to one bad shot per round," Missy recalled having advised Michaels.

That paid off. Michaels pitched to within gimme. After salvaging par, he punched the air in celebration.

At the par-5 17th, Michaels and Juvic were on in two. Michaels eagled the hole; Juvic missed his.

"Maribay talaga siya," said Juvic, who had birdied 9 earlier.

But this one takes the cake.

Michaels got a 2-stroke penalty on 15 for kicking a leaf he had found in the sand trap of No. 15. He did it before he blasted out, a clear violation of the rule.

With the penalty, Michaels' lead of 4 strokes was down to 2.

Suddenly, the crown was within reach once more for Juvic. It would appear he'd stashed away the crown; just the day before, Juvic birdied 16, 17 and 18.

Alas, it didn't happen. And the rest, as we love to say, is history.

Anyway at Riviera's Grill Room after the awarding ceremonies, Michaels and his wife, Missy, joined DHL's top men Charles "Mate" Brewer and Rod V. Feliciano, Riviera board chair Jun Jayme and former President Fidel V. Ramos for a round of drinks. The couple proved to all and sundry that they were "cowboys." They had San Miguel Beer pale pilsen. Afterwards, Michaels gulped down two swigs of cognac and Missy, a glass of red wine.

"Definitely, I'll be back to defend my crown next year," said Michaels. "By then, I hope Juvic would be a pro."

FASTBREAK. I am glad that Shell's Rich Alvarez was finally harnessed by Shell's American coach John Moran on Sunday. Rich, the top rookie pick this year, had 12 points and 7 rebounds in Shell's losing cause. Will Moran be here for long? I ask this because almost everybody believes that Moran is not what the doctor ordered for Pilipinas Shell. I guess Bob Kanapi is busy these days sorting out ways on how to send home Moran.

SPORTSWATCH**Minardi enters Asian Formula F3**

Italian-based Minardi F1 Team has announced the formation of the Minardi Team Asia which will enter Asian drivers in both the Formula BMW Asia and Asian Formula 3 series in 2004. The Asian Formula 3 car will participate in the Promotions Class under the management of Castrol Ambi Pur Team Goddard. The driver will be announced at a later date. Mark Goddard of Asian Formula 3 reported he was delighted with the new tie up as it demonstrated that those who matter in motor sport were taking notice of what the Asian Formula Three Corporation is trying to achieve.

Negros, NCR booters down opponents

DEFENDING champion Negros Occidental and top seed NCR/Philippine Air Force hurdled stubborn opponents in the inaugurations of the 2004 PFF/SuperFerry National Championship last Sunday at the Ateneo pitch in Katipunan. Negros striker Jun Jun Fegidero sent the ball into the back of the net just 11 minutes into the match to give his team the winning goal over Masbate. NCR/PAF shattered a 1-1 count on two fine strikes by NCR's Randy Bela-ong in the 53rd and 64th minutes to down Laguna, 3-1. Cebu beat Dipolog, 4-0, through Limar Baunsi on the 21st/41st minute, Glen Ramos (44th) and Marcos Larrazabal (59th). Davao played catch up before salvaging a 2-2 draw with Cagayan de Oro-Misamis Oriental on Dodong Mortillero's strike in the 70th minute.



BEST FENCER
National fencing coach and tournament director Marilee Estampador presents the adidas Fragrance and Body Care for Men trophy to University of the East's Joel Landicho for emerging as Male Fencer of the Year in the Escrime Liga national inter-school championships at the PSC Fencing Center in Philsports, Pasig City.

Tribo targets RP superbantam crown

CEBU CITY—ALA Boy Reynald Tribo will be the first among members of the New Generation ALA Boys to vie for a Philippine title when he takes on RP No. 2 and one-time WBC Youth featherweight contender Jake Verano on April 4 for the vacant RP superbantam title at the Mandaue City Sports and Cultural Complex. The Bago City-raised Tribo, ranked no. 1 RP superbantam, dukes it out with the Bukidnon-based Verano of the Leonil Lazarito Stable, the No. 2 contender for the plum vacated by ex-RP champ and now OPBF champ Jimrex Jaca. The 19-year-old Tribo remains unbeaten in 6 fights with 4 victories inside the distance, while the 22-year-old Verano parades 8 wins, 2 losses, 1 draw with 5 KO's. *Salven L. Lagumbay, contributor*

San Antonio de Padua, Poveda win

SAN ANTONIO de Padua College and Poveda Learning Center subdued their respective rivals to rule the 9th Milo BEST Women's Volleyball League (WVL) last Sunday at the San Beda College gym. The SACP belles held off St. James Academy, 25-23, 25-14, 25-14, to retain the high school crown, while PLC wrestled the elementary title from Colegio San Agustin, 26-24, 17-25, 15-8. The individual awards went to SCC's Jolina Hernandez (best server), SACP's Jenelyn Ayarte (best setter) and Ginaflor Alanguilan (best spiker and most valuable player) in the high school division and CSA's Katrina Concepcion Fernando (best server), Miriam's Monica Peralta (best setter) and PLC's Lauren Francesca Laudico (best spiker) and Ma. Loren Lantin (MVP) in the elementary level.

Battle of the Heavyweights Saturday

THE "BATTLE of the Heavyweights 7-Cock Derby" is set on Saturday, March 6, at the air-conditioned Las Piñas Coliseum with 70 encounters scheduled. Derby starts at 5 p.m. with Sagupaan Complex 3000 as sponsor. It will be a fight-to-the-finish among the 20 participants bannared by sabong idol Patrick Antonio, lawyer Rudy Salud, Lito Orillaza and William Co, Mayor Jessie Vico, Sonny Lagon, businessman Gerry Ramos, Gov. Ito Ynares and former ambassador Danding Cojuangco, Mayor Nene Aguilar, Joey delos Santos, Alfie Sy, Eric dela Rosa of Pasay, Benjie Lim, Boy Royo, Pol Estrella, Ric de Guzman, sportsman Matt Bitanga and Dicky Lim. The required entry fee is P330,000, making the event an exclusive affair for the so-called "heavyweights" of cockfighting. Two derbies with the same format were also held last year. Cojuangco won the event at the Mandaluyong Coliseum while Jet Fernando and Ramon Mancanares topped the super cockfest at Cavite Coliseum. For inquiries, contact 873-1040 or 09205609404 (Julius).

Baseball great Ardina; 82

BASEBALL great Rev. Faustino Partosa Ardina died last Saturday after a lingering illness. He was 82. His remains lie in state at Seville St., Ciudad Grande Subdivision, Sta. Rosa, Laguna. Interment is on Thursday (March 4), at the Sta. Rosa Memorial Gardens. Ardina was a left fielder of the Dream IX Philippine team that made its mark during baseball's golden years in the 1950s and 1960s. He is one of a few Filipino ballplayers who were able to score against the St. Louis Cardinals and the New York Yankees during many RP-US goodwill games. He is survived by wife Maura, children Edgardo, Nida, Baby, Beth and Noemi; and grandchildren, including World Junior Golf champion Dottie Ardina.

**PRIZED CATCH**

Fishing enthusiast Deo C. Alvarez Jr., general manager of Atlas Publishing Company Inc., shows his prized catch of 5.8 kilos barracuda (left) and 6.9 kilos talakitok with boat owner and guide Ernesto Tolentino in Calatagan, Batangas, recently.

1st Annual Bellevue Cup March 8

THE BELLEVUE Hotel will hold the 1st Annual Bellevue Cup at the Alabang Golf and Country Club on March 8. Sponsors of the tournament are North America Construction Inc., Northwest Airlines, Volvo, Globe Telecom, The Heritage Park, Chinatrust Commercial Banking Corporation, Save More Supermarket, Las Palmas Furniture, Pisanti Golf, Versia Inc, Gillette, IP Ventures, Transnational Diversified Group, American Express Travel and Adventure. Members of the Alabang business and social circuit will also grace the tournament. For inquiries, call 771-8181.

Carr-Antig tops Malarayat tilt

THE TANDEM of Mike Carr and Wilmer Antig scored a net 9-under-par 63 to run away with the Class A championship in the recent Malarayat Challenge 2004 at Malarayat Golf and Country Club in Lipa City. Carr, a golf director, and Antig, a golf marshal, beat 11 other partnerships in the tournament held to raise funds for the education of some 20 sons and daughters of caddies and employees of the club. Partners Gil Bandoja and Ding Andal won low-gross honors. In the women's Class A, the pair of Florence Okiyama and Milla Suarez emerged champions, with Gloria Argana and Evelyn Solis taking the Class B plum. Melchor Morales and Lito Magsino topped the men's Class B while Edwin Lipat and Lito Abarentos ruled Class C. Nick Pedro won the putting contest. *Roy Dansoco*

OLYMPIC CHARTER**Dayrit gives fresh recognition to BAP**

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINE Olympic Committee verdict is in: The Basketball Association of the Philippines is still the country's duly recognized cage body.

POC president Celso Dayrit, back from International Olympic Committee meetings in Athens where he sought advice on how to resolve the power struggle between the BAP and the court-backed Bapi, said in a statement: "The IOC advice is consistent with the position of the POC."

"The recognition of the BAP by the POC remains, therefore, for as long as the BAP is able to function legally and continue to govern sport within the bounds of the Olympic Charter," added Dayrit.

Dayrit said that though the POC must respect the prevailing laws of the country, it is compelled to "always adhere to the provisions of the Olympic charter."

Quoting Rules 32 and 33 of the Olympic

charter, Dayrit said that for a national Olympic committee to recognize an NSA, it must be accredited by its relevant international federation. Likewise, an NSA must also have "a specific and real activity undertaking the development of sports locally and internationally."

On both counts, Dayrit said, BAP qualifies as the sole governing body of the sport. This despite the fact that BAPI enjoys the favor of the Court of Appeals, Office of the Government Corporate Counsel as well as the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Dayrit, however, exhorted the BAP headed by re-elected president Tiny Literal and secretary general Graham Lim, to extend its hand in unity with the Nic Jorge-led BAP Inc. along with other cage bodies in the country.

"We call upon the leaders of the BAP, the BAPI, and all other stake-holders to work together and chart a new course for stronger Philippine bas-

ketball," Dayrit said in a statement.

Incidentally, Dayrit's statement came at a time when Bapi was set to hold a meeting tomorrow to form a super-body for basketball. The Bapi will reportedly be joined by the PBA, PBL, UAAP and NCAA, among other basketball organizations.

Dayrit pointed out that the BAP should ensure its control "on the use of the best athletes and the formation of the strongest team that this nation can muster."

Otherwise, BAP is courting sanction from the POC, among other bodies, on the ground of inconsistency to the Olympic charter and the national interest.

But Lim, who is the commissioner of the NCAA, has stressed that BAP has always been in the thick of things regarding the proposed super-body. His head coach Joe Lipa has served as UAAP commissioner for the past two years.

O'Neal propels Lakers past Nets; Celts prevail

NEW YORK—Shaquille O'Neal grabbed 19 points and 14 rebounds to propel the Los Angeles Lakers to a 100-83 win over the New Jersey Nets Sunday, their ninth victory in 11 games.

The Lakers held the host Nets to 51 points in the first three quarters in a strong defensive performance.

Los Angeles received a balanced scoring attack led by Gary Payton's 16 points as the Nets were beaten for the second time in three outings after a franchise-record 14-game winning streak.

Kobe Bryant had 11 points, 10 rebounds and six assists in 31 minutes for the Lakers.

Horace Grant posted 14 points and seven rebounds while Brian Cook added 10 points for the Lakers in 16 minutes.

Richard Jefferson collected 19 points for New Jersey, which is now 14-2 under new coach Lawrence Frank.

Kenyon Martin added 11 points and Jason Kidd 10 despite playing only 28 minutes due to a bruised knee.

In Toronto, Paul Pierce scored 22 points and Mark Blount had 14 points and 10 rebounds to give the Boston Celtics a 91-82 triumph over the Raptors.

Jiri Welsch picked up 15 points for the Celtics, who had back-to-back wins against the Raptors after ending a seven-game losing streak Friday.

Donyell Marshall contributed 18 points and 10 rebounds for the Raptors, who are mired in a nine-game losing streak.

In Milwaukee, Keith Van Horn claimed 11 points and 12 rebounds to push the Bucks to a 108-104 win over the Miami Heat.

Michael Redd had 27 points and Desmond Mason 21 for the Bucks, who have three straight victories.

Eddie Jones scored 25 points and Lamar Odom 22 for the Heat, who outscored Milwaukee 37-22 in the fourth quarter.

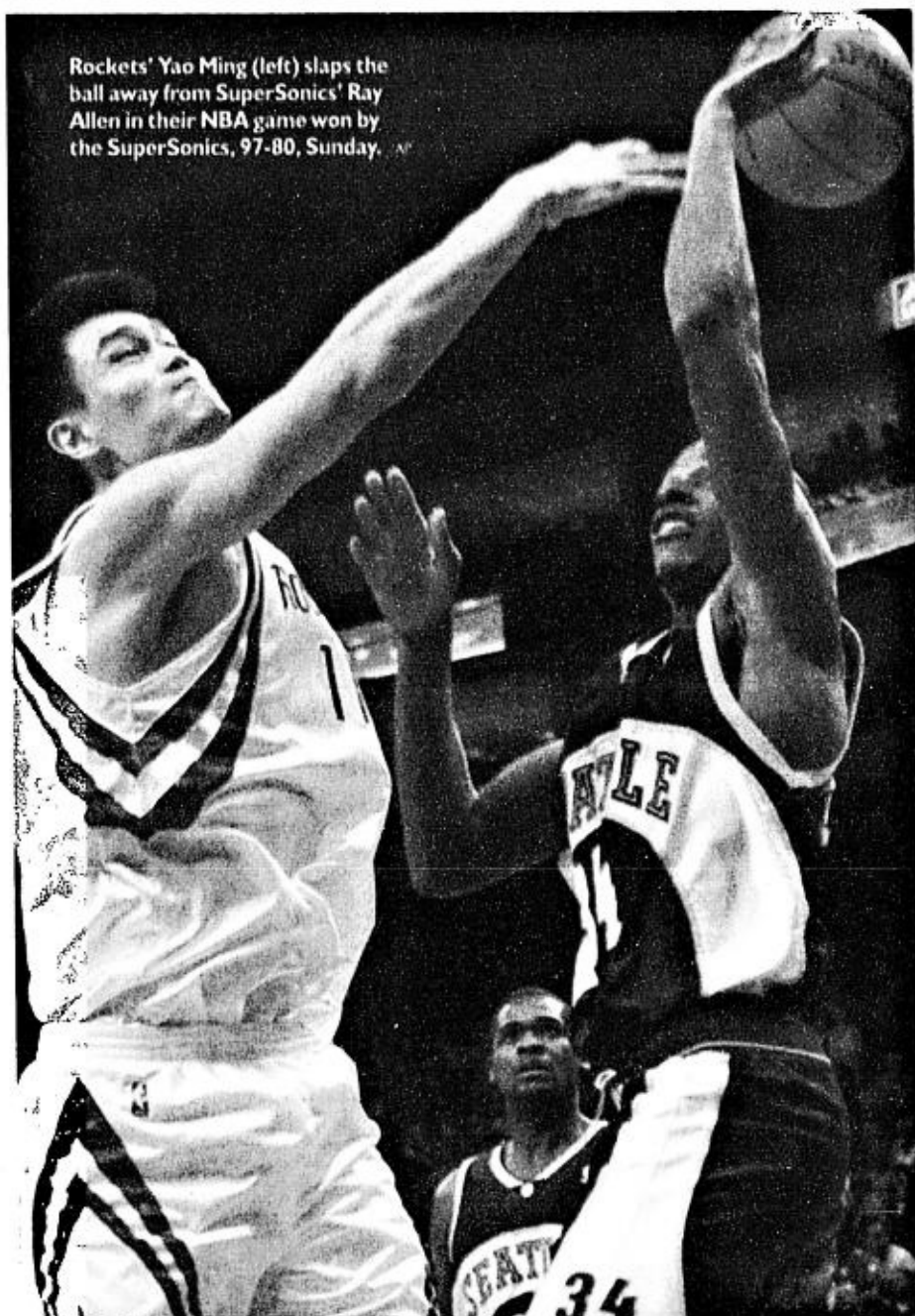
In Los Angeles, Rasheed Wallace chalked up 15 points and 10 rebounds and Ben Wallace added 13 points and 13 rebounds to power the Detroit Pistons to a 100-88 victory over the Clippers.

Chauncey Billups led all scorers with 28 points and Richard Hamilton had 21 to carry Detroit to its fourth win in a row.

Elton Brand piled up 26 points and 10 rebounds while Quentin Richardson added 22 points and 10 rebounds for the Clippers, who have lost three of their last four games.

In Houston, Vladimir Radmanovic totaled 19 points and 11 rebounds as the Seattle SuperSonics defeated the Rockets 97-80.

Rashard Lewis recorded 22 points and Vitaly Potapenko chipped in with 17 to help the



Rockets' Yao Ming (left) slaps the ball away from SuperSonics' Ray Allen in their NBA game won by the SuperSonics, 97-80, Sunday.

Sonics snap a three-game losing skid.

Steve Francis scored 15 points for the Rockets while Kelvin Cato had 11 points and 11 rebounds.

In Philadelphia, 18 points from Aaron McKie guided the short-handed 76ers to an 81-74 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves. *Reuters*

Complete results:

Boston 91, Toronto 82; Milwaukee 108, Miami 104; Seattle 97, Houston 80; Detroit 100, LA Clippers 88; LA Lakers 100, New Jersey 83; Philadelphia 81, Minnesota 74; Sacramento 108, Phoenix 94; Denver 107, New York 96.

Slocum triumphs over Baddeley

TUCSON, Arizona—Heath Slocum and Aaron Baddeley battled all day, Slocum emerging with the victory at the Chrysler Classic of Tucson after Baddeley bogeyed the 18th hole.

Slocum of the United States and Australia's Baddeley were never separated by more than a stroke on Sunday as they duked it out for the \$540,000 first prize in the three million-dollar tournament.

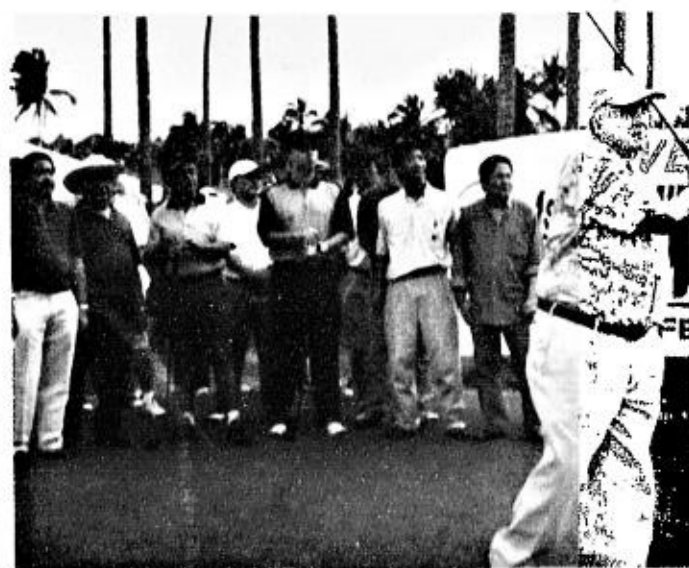
"I am very, very excited," Slocum said after he nabbed his first PGA Tour title. "I would have loved to have made that putt on the last hole to end on a birdie. At the same time, I feel

like I hit the shots that I needed to get there and maybe apply a little pressure."

Baddeley made his first three-putt in the 72-hole tournament at the 18th. But it didn't take away from Slocum's joy.

Slocum fired a seven-under-par 65 to finish at 22-under 266. Baddeley carded a 66 and ended up at 267, settling for the \$324,000 second prize.

Rory Sabbatini of South Africa, Harrison Fragar and Mark Hensby of Australia shared third place at 18-under 270 over the 7,109-yard, par-72 Omni Tucson National Golf Club. *AFP*

**FVR JOINS JONES JR.**

Renowned course architect Robert Trent Jones Jr. hits his drive during a fellowship tournament held to mark his visit at the Summit Point Golf and Country Club in Lipa, Batangas. Joining him in the special event are former president Fidel V. Ramos, Senator Ralph Recto, landowners Conrad Leviste and son Robbie, Toti Cariño of Fil-Estate, among others.

Goalie dies after collision on the field

GUATEMALA CITY—Guatemala international goalkeeper Danny Ortiz died Sunday after colliding with an opponent during a Guatemalan league soccer match.

Ortiz, who was playing for Municipal, crashed into Comunicaciones forward Mario Rodriguez, suffering a hard blow to the chest that left him briefly unconscious on the field.

The 27-year-old was taken to a hospital, where he was said to be in stable condition, but he later died.

"Unfortunately, his heart did not respond," said team physician Dr. Jorge Jerez in a joint news conference with hospital doctors.

Comunicaciones won the match between Guatemala's two most popular clubs, 2-0.

Ortiz debuted in the first division in 1998, and also played for Comunicaciones.

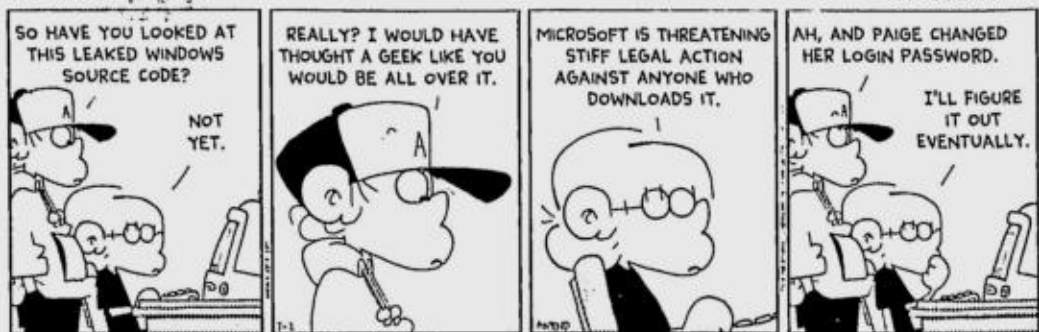
"The club is going to take care of all the expenses," Municipal president Gerardo Villa said. "His wife is in a state of shock, for that reason we are waiting for his parents."

Two years ago, Municipal player Johnny Aldana died during a training session.

Several other athletes have died recently while playing their sports, including Hungarian international Miklos Feher, who died after collapsing on the field during a Portuguese league soccer match in January. *AP*

FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND



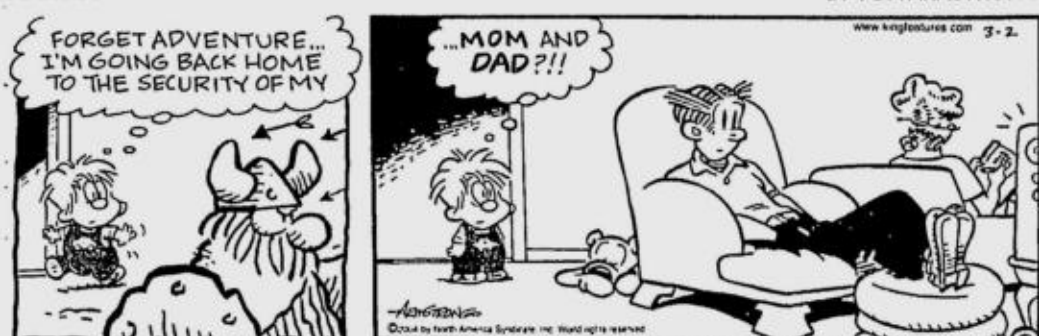
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA



MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG



PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR



BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT



MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL



ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO



DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS



HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You are highly imaginative. You are also intense and purposeful. Your unswerving loyalty to others and to your own ideals is strong. Sometimes you devote yourself exclusively to your work. Because of this, you have to seek balance in your life. The year ahead focuses on your closest relationships and partnerships.

Birthdate of: Theodore Seuss Geisel (Dr. Seuss) writer; Karen Carpenter, singer; Tom Wolfe, author.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): It's important to remember that you need a bit more rest now than usual. You're quite aggressive about earning (and spending) your money. Give yourself some room.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): This is the perfect day to talk to siblings, especially a sister. Discussions with all female friends and relatives will be rewarding and informative.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): You're in the mood to shop! It's not a bad idea to buy clothes that enhance your image; you're in the public eye now. (At least more than you usually are.)

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): The Moon is in your sign, and on top of that—the Moon is your ruler. You might feel a bit more emotional today. On the other hand, things will tend to go your way.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is the perfect day for a bit of seclusion. Sneak off for a quiet cup of coffee if you can. Ponder some major decisions that are waiting for you down the road.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Enjoy friends, groups and club members, and especially female company today. Discuss domestic issues. Trade recipes and tips on how to live with style.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Discussions with a female boss, your mother or any other authority figure are likely today. People are impressed with your hardworking efforts of late. It's time to take a bow.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You might talk a friend into joining you for a fun getaway somewhere. This is a good day to make future plans for travel or advanced education and training courses.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): With such a strong focus on your domestic scene and family situation, you have to keep track of bills and shared possessions. Tackle some of these red-tape questions today.

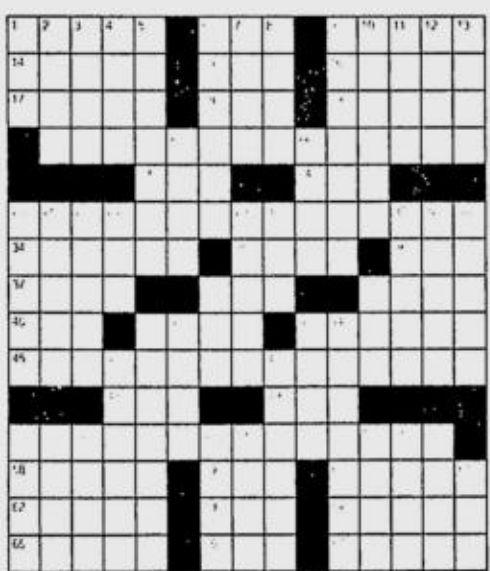
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): The Moon is opposite your sign today. That means it's your turn to give a little. You're going to have to go more than halfway when dealing with others.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You might feel undecided about something at work today. Should you, or shouldn't you? (If you act with discipline, you'll have no regrets.)

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): This is a lovely day for fun, flirtation, catching a movie and playful activities with children. Enjoy yourself! Take a little break.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Giraffe's cousin
6 Art Tatum's jazz style
9 Uneven cuts
14 Bike feature
15 Hubbub
16 Of sound quality
17 Incantation
18 Fawn's mom
19 Ne plus
20 Market plot
23 Gear tooth
24 Exist
25 20A co-conspirators
34 Additional edits
35 Employ
36 Fate
37 Aware of
38 Stereo part
39 Son of Agrippina
40 Of ears; prel.
41 Puccini song
43 Atom with a variable nucleus
45 20A co-conspirators
48 Birthday number
49 Jack of "Barney Miller"
50 Lesson for 25A and 45A
58 Burton of "Rooftop"
59 Dallas sch.
60 Brouhaha
62 Dancer Astaire
63 Tell whoppers
64 Madagascar lemur
65 Nuzzled
66 California fort
67 Cromwell's earldom



By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR

3/2/04



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3/2/04

DOWN
1 Wife of Saturn
2 Military cap
3 Middle East gulf
4 Cique members
5 Unlawful
6 Rotten apple's associate?

7 Aroma
8 Keats or Yeats
9 J.E.B. and Gilbert
10 Saling's Caulfield
11 Debate side
12 Senator Jake the astronaut
13 Smelting residue
14 Adams and Rickles
15 Spotted infrequently
16 Boy Scout unit
17 Oscar de la
18 One in a cast
19 Couple
20 Mountain lions
21 Horned viper
22 Bursera resin
23 Music critic
24 Ned
25 Mail unit
26 Jordan's nickname
27 And also not
28 Enraged
29 Marsh plant

43 Aware of
44 Small terrier
45 Mexican menu item
46 Published
47 Extended family
48 Start again from scratch
52 Corner and
53 Christmas, today
54 Bathroom ruler
55 Soprano Lily
56 Tacks on
57 Eld
58 "With... You Get Eggroll"

BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON



MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO



KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA



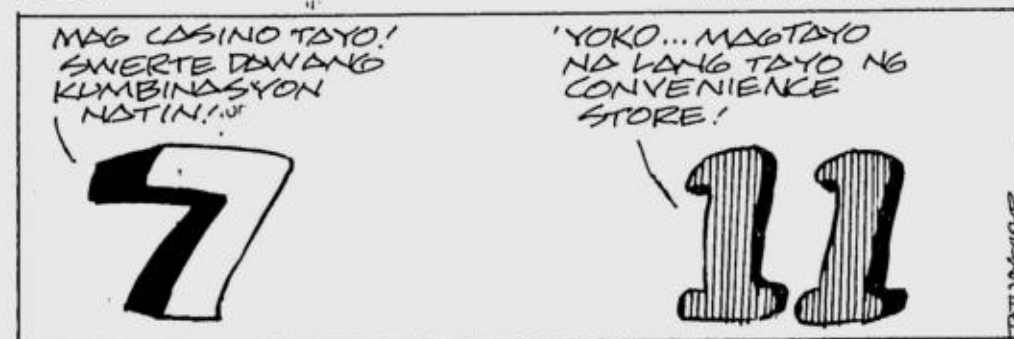
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO



TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING



New dimension

BROADCAST journalist Vicky Morales started hosting Channel 7's "Wish Ko Lang" last Feb. 14, adding a new dimension to her TV career. On Channel 2's "Simpleng Hiling," Karen Davila has shown that news-oriented TV personalities can host wish-fulfillment programs, so Vicky isn't exactly venturing into uncharted territory. Still, the shift is a new experience for her, so her effectivity isn't assured.

We viewed Morales' first outing on "Wish Ko Lang," on the show's Valentine episode, and can report that, despite her best efforts to adjust to the program's less objective and formal orientation, she still came across as a newscaster, rather than a caring, giving "fairy god-mother" with the "power" to grant people's most fervent wishes.

This, despite Morales' obvious emotional involvement in the problems tackled by the show, and her joy at seeing them at least temporarily assuaged, if not more definitively solved.

In time, Morales should be able to get away from the briskness and terseness of her more familiar newscaster persona, so things should be looking up in subsequent episodes as far as this problem is concerned.

If Morales wants to have a more personal impact on viewers, she should make it a point to get involved in all of the cases that the program tackles. This will show that she cares so much about the "wishers" and their problems that she's ready to spend long hours and travel great distances to personally gift them with solutions to their problems, and thus help them change their lives.

Last Feb. 14, this wasn't always the case. On a case that required a provincial trip to arrange a couple's wished-for wedding, Morales didn't appear to be around.

It's tiring and time-consuming to be completely a hands-on host; but if Morales gives it a try in subsequent editions of the program, she should elicit viewers' special appreciation and admiration.

This should speed the process of fully integrating herself into the show and vivifying its avowed intention to convince the program's "wishes" that people involved in the program truly and deeply feel for them.

San Miguel Chorale

The San Miguel Master Chorale has been invited to perform at the Seventh World Symposium on Choral Music to be held in Kyoto, Japan, from July 27 to Aug. 3, 2005. The SMMC was chosen from hundreds of aspirants worldwide.

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre



The chorale is being managed by The San Miguel Foundation for the Performing Arts, the executive and artistic director of which is Ryan Cayabyab.

The SMMC's proposed program for the world symposium features an all-Filipino repertoire including the works of Cayabyab, Eudencia Palaruan, Francisco Feliciano and Dyson Pesquera, a member of the SMMC.

The chorale will be performing selections from their proposed Japan repertoire on March

13 at the CCP Titled "Kayumanggi," the concert will feature Filipino and Asian works for a cappella and accompanied voices. Eudencia Palaruan conducts the chorale and the San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra. Call 891-5610.

Billy Crystal

For the eighth time, Billy Crystal will host the Academy Awards, which was telecast live at 9 a.m. last March 1 on RPN-9.

Crystal's hosting of the Oscars has earned him more Emmy nominations than any host in history. He's won four Emmys for his writing and hosting of the Oscars show.

'Rakugo' in English

"Rakugo" in English, a Japanese sit-down comedy performed by the Philippine Playhouse Inc., will be staged at 3 and 8 p.m. on March 4 at the CCP's Tanghalang Huseng Batute.

The comedy is presented by the Japan Foundation's Manila office, the Embassy of Japan, and the CCP, and features Shofukutei Kakushow.

New shows on Animax

The Animax channel (Sky-Cable 26, Home 18, Dream 48) telecasts "Cyborg 009" on Weekend Anime every Saturday at 11 a.m.; "Clamp School" on Mega Zone" M-F at 9 p.m.; "Princess Sarah" on Kids Hour M-F at 6 p.m., and "Saber Marionette" on Youth Hours M-F at 7 p.m.

'Brother Bear'

Hailed as one of the best animated features shown last year, "Brother Bear" has come out with its soundtrack album on Walt Disney Records. Most of the songs are written and performed by Phil Collins.

Tina Turner makes a special appearance with her version of "Great Spirits." Other cuts are the hit single "Look Through My Eyes," "Transformation," "Welcome," "Three Brothers," and "Wilderness of Danger and Beauty."

Backstage at Oscars: Dazed, confused winners, unsmiling Billy Crystal

LOS ANGELES—When you win an Oscar you don't just get a trophy—you also get a torn piece of paper.

As Sofia Coppola was being swept away from the stage after winning best original screenplay for "Lost in Translation," presenter Susan Sarandon hurried after her, yelling, "Sofia! Sofia!"

Coppola stopped and Sarandon stuffed the envelope containing her name into her hand. "Keep this," said Sarandon, a former Oscar winner. "You'll want to frame that."

Nicole Kidman, who presented the lead actor award to Sean Penn for "Mystic River," did the same favor for him.

"Sean! Sean!" shouted Kidman, also a previous Oscar winner. "Take that."

She slipped the envelope into his hand and he thanked her with a kiss on the cheek.

Awed look

There is a dazed expression shared by most Oscar winners when they walk away from millions of viewers and back into reality.

Tim Robbins, who collected the supporting actor trophy Sunday for "Mystic River," strolled backstage with an awed look in his eyes and began wandering the wrong way as his handlers tried to herd him down a walkway to the press room.

"Oh," he exclaimed as they grabbed him, snapping back to attention. He smiled. "I just wanted to go home."

Catherine Zeta-Jones, who presented the trophy to Robbins, kissed him and offered congratulations. Then, to the astonishment of everyone within earshot, she clutched at the back of her crimson gown and said, "I need to get this thing off."

Even Robbins' eyes widened. Zeta-Jones turned around, exposing the uncomfortable looking remote microphone pack wedged between her back and the gown.

"I feel like a robot with this on," she said.

Then it made sense.

Robin Williams, who presented the feature animated film award to "Finding Nemo," crossed paths with Renee Zellweger, who was wearing a white ball gown tied in the back with great jagged plumes of fabric.

After complimenting her on her outfit, Williams quipped, "be careful you don't put an eye out on the back part."

Fancier

Then Williams continued walking with Andrew Stanton, the "Finding Nemo" co-writer and director, who claimed the animated trophy. They walked from the glamorous stage to the drapery-cloaked green room and then down a gritty, grimy hallway, toward waiting reporters and photographers.

"Geez, it gets fancier as you go," Stanton said as he vanished around a corner.

As Owen Wilson and Ben Stiller rehearsed lines for a comedy bit during their presentation of the animated short category, Zellweger resealed herself in the audience in



BEST Supporting actor Tim Robbins and Best Actor Sean Penn.

time to collect a supporting actress award for "Cold Mountain."

She returned to the backstage area, clutching her trophy and bearing that dazed look.

How did she feel?

Zellweger took a long time to answer.

"I ... don't ... know," she said as her picture was taken. She raised her hand above her head and waved it. "I feel like I'm floating here, somewhere."

Robbins passed by again, and the two stopped to share a few whispered words that they concluded with a toast of sorts—clinking the golden heads of their Oscars together.

Hours earlier, 10 minutes before showtime, host Billy Crystal emerged from his dressing room, sipping a glass of water with lemon. He grouped his writers together in a circle. They put their hands in the middle and wished each other a good show before breaking apart.

Crystal paced backstage in the



HOST Billy Crystal smiled only when he went on stage.

shadows, preparing for his monologue by blowing air between his lips and making a "yo-yyy, yo-yyy" sound to work his vocal chords.

Most annoying

With one minute left to go, he watched a TV screen showing "Access Hollywood" commentator Billy Bush grabbing celebrities out of their seats for interviews in ABC's preshow telecast.

"This is the most annoying man in show business," Crystal said to no one in particular.

He shared a few whispered words with Sean Connery, who then went onstage to introduce the telecast. Next came Crystal's videotaped comedy montage, featuring the host doing everything from riding Seabiscuit to clowning as wicked Gollum.

The live audience of thousands sat to Crystal's left laughing, and millions around the world watched on television.

Crystal didn't crack a smile.

Seconds later he was onstage, finally smiling, greeting the waves of applause.

Overheard at the Oscars

"It's a clean sweep!" Steven Spielberg announcing best picture winner "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King," which won a record-tying 11 Oscars.

"This is just unbelievable and I'm so honored and relieved that the academy and the members of the academy that have supported us and have seen past the trolls and the wizards and the hobbits and recognizing fantasy this year. Fantasy is an F-word that hopefully the 5-second delay won't do anything with" Oscar-winning director Peter Jackson said after "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" won the best picture Academy Award.

"If there's one thing that actors know, other than that there weren't any WMDs, it's that there is no such thing as best in acting and that's proven by these great actors that I was nominated with," said Best-actor winner Sean Penn ("Mystic River"), referring to weapons of mass destruction.

"And I know everybody in

New Zealand's been thanked so I'm going to thank everybody in South Africa, my home country. They are all watching tonight. And I'm bringing this home next week," said Best-actress winner Charlize Theron ("Monster").

"In this movie I play the victim of abuse and violence and if you are out there and are a person who has had that tragedy befall you there is no shame and no weakness in seeking help and counseling. It is sometimes the strongest thing you can do to stop the cycle of violence," said Supporting-actor winner Tim Robbins, accepting his Oscar for "Mystic River."

"Thank you for sharing this journey with me, every day of it. Without you there would be none of this. Thank you for dreaming so much bigger than I would ever dare to dream and for making me believe," Supporting-actress winner Renee Zellweger, ("Cold Mountain"), said to manager John Carrabino, during her Oscar acceptance speech.

"It just popped into my head. I've only been going out with him two months. In Australia, we're very open about the whole thing. It wasn't a problem as far as I was concerned," said Adam Elliot, winner of best animated short ("Harvie Krumpet"), on whether he was worried about the 5-second delay when he thanked his boyfriend during his acceptance speech.

"Forty years ago this country went down a rabbit hole in Vietnam and millions died. I fear we're going down a rabbit hole once again," said Errol Morris, winner of best documentary feature for "The Fog of War."

"This is a horse of a different color, absolutely. It's not a bad way to spend the afternoon. ... I'm still in shock and stupefied over it. I'm here to say thanks for the nomination and to applaud," Johnny Depp said on his best-actor nomination for "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl."

Boxers for Bill

"What am I wearing? Boxers," Oscar nominee Bill Murray said when asked what he was wearing.

"I spent a lot of time there after college, and I have friends there, so I just wanted to do a movie there. And I wanted to see him in a Kimono," said Sofia Coppola on shooting "Lost in Translation" in Japan with Bill Murray.

"And every writer needs a muse. Mine was Bill Murray," added Coppola after winning original screenplay Oscar.

"There's Johnny Depp, the sexiest man alive. Did I just say that out loud? Of course Johnny's nominated for playing (MPAA chief) Jack Valenti's worst nightmare, a slightly gay pirate," Oscar host Billy Crystal said during his opening monologue.

"Gentlemen, start your egos" said Crystal kicking off the show.

AP

Taming the wild child in Matet

I REALLY thought Matet de Leon would end up with her longtime boyfriend Harold because I personally saw how inseparable they were. It was quite a turbulent affair.

Mater's world revolved around Harold that it sometimes wreaked havoc on her career. Too much passion perhaps burned them both out so they eventually parted ways.

I guess it was cager Mikey Estrada who was able to tame the wild child in Matet so much so that she married him (in civil rites. Church wedding to follow this month). I remember tagging along with my mom at Mater's baptism (My ma is her ninang), and now the "baby" is about to have a baby!

Hopefully motherhood will make Mater's "love-hate" relationship with her "Mama Guy" come full circle, and all wounds shall be healed!

The fun side of Maryo J

I TEASED my "Tokyo Love" Direk Maryo J. de los Reyes. I told him, "After bagging such a prestigious award in the Berlin Film Festival for Magnifico, I can't seem to associate with your Maskulados wards anymore! It's quite a far cry!"

He guffawed, and said, "That repre-

sents the fun side of me!" So very Maryo J! He has always been multidimensional. How boring life would be if we all just expressed one side of our personality! Whatever side Maryo J shows, it's definitely magnifico!

Youngest acting nominee

JIRO Manio, the precocious kid in "Magnifico" is the youngest nominee for Best Actor. He is up against the likes of Boyet de Leon in the upcoming Star Awards.

I asked Jiro if he had a hard time preparing for his role in the much-acclaimed film. Without hesitation he blurted out

"Hindi po!"

As Direk Maryo puts it, the boy is a natural, and acting is effortless to him. Maybe Jiro should conduct an acting workshop for aspiring child stars. Wouldn't that be a more secure passport to success than some contrived and overdone kiddie talent search?

Shining on her own

DANICA Sotto is excited about the release of her album. Her brother Oyo Boy did the rapping in one of the cuts. She just hopes that the public will give her a chance to shine on her own.

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal



"I am proud to be Dina Bonnevie's and Vic Sotto's daughter, but I want to be known as me. I find it funny when people expect to find a remake of my Mom's song 'Bakit Ba Ganyan?' Or my dad's 'Ipagpatawad Mo' in my album. I love those songs but I'd rather do something I can call my own," she said.

Danica is slowly getting out of the shadow of her famous parents as she steps into the path her Dad and Mom had taken.

Letting go

I HAD a swell time as a guest in Anthony Pangilinan's late night show "Open Line" on RPN 9 (11:30 p.m. Tuesdays). The topic was about letting go. Anthony has Pastor Clem as his co-host and several counselors, who were answering phone calls from troubled souls out there.

I was amazed to see that their phones never stopped ringing throughout the show. Anthony gives sound advice without ramming it down your throat. He injects humor and shares his personal anecdotes in the right dosages. That night, he revealed that Maricel (Laxa) and he had a cooling off phase before they finally took the plunge. He said that they felt they were getting too close for comfort so they took a step backwards.

Their decision turned out for the better because they have one of the few rock solid unions in show biz where marriages are mostly on the rocks.

Long-distance romance

DINGDONG Dantes admits that his romance with Antoinette Taus is still going strong in spite of their long-distance setup. Toni is back in the US with her family. After her failed attempt to be one of MTV's VJs, Toni decided to lie low. Rumors have been circulating ever since she left that Dingdong and Toni have a love child in the US. Could the little birdie spreading that rumor turn out to be a stork?

TJ's girl

I MET my co-host TJ Manotoc's girl-

friend, and I must say that they are so well-suited for each other. She's simple, classy and reserved. I have never seen TJ glow the way he did when they were seated beside each other. Both of them are home buddies. And I see no reason why they wouldn't build a home of their own in due time!

Now that "The Correspondents" and "The Probe Team" have moved to ABC-5, and with "INQ TV" also in the line-up, Channel 5 seems to be really beefing up its news and public affairs department.

For sure, GMA 7 and ABS-CBN will also come up with counter-attacks. It remains to be seen which station will really heat up with the election fever.

Personal

MADAMO Gid na salamat to the management and staff of Bohol Beach Club (Sir Anos "Eagle" Fonacier, Allan Santos, Anton Aquino, Tony Ceniza, Lielz Flores, Joxara Tutor, Ray Maghamil, Dondon Nistal, Willy Batton & Rakkling) for the best weekend getaway I've had in ages!

For feedback e-mail friends_elpueblo@yahoo.com or dollyanne@truefaithband.com



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- 7 DUPLEX
- 8 COLD MOUNTAIN

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- 2 DUPLEX
- 3 HAUNTED MANSION
- 4 CHASING LIBERTY
- 5 STUCK ON YOU
- 6 KUYA
- 7 MILAN
- 8 IN THE CUT

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- 2 DUPLEX
- 3 COLD MOUNTAIN
- 4 GHOSTHOUSE
- 5 KUYA
- 6 MILAN
- 7 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
- 8 U-BELT

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO

- 1 HAUNTED MANSION
- 2 MILAN
- 3 KUYA
- 4 MONA LISA SMILE

SM SUPER CTR. SUCAT

- 1 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE
- 2 KUYA
- 3 MILAN
- 4 DUPLEX

SM BICUTAN

- 1 DUPLEX
- 2 KUYA
- 3 MILAN
- 4 SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE

SM CITY BAGUIO

- 1 COLD MOUNTAIN
- 2 LOST ISLAND
- 3 MILAN
- 4 CHASING LIBERTY

SM STA. MESA

- 1 MILAN
- 2 KUYA
- 3 DUPLEX
- 4 WATER DEMON
- 5 COLD MOUNTAIN
- 6 GHOSTHOUSE
- 7 HAUNTED MANSION
- 8 CHASING LIBERTY
- 9 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
- 10 U-BELT

SM SOUTHMALL

- 1 WATER DEMON
- 2 HAUNTED MANSION
- 3 DUPLEX
- 4 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
- 5 LOST IN TRANSLATION
- 6 BONE SNATCHER
- 7 MILAN
- 8 COLD MOUNTAIN
- 9 KUYA
- 10 U-BELT

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- 2 CHASING LIBERTY
- 3 WATER DEMON
- 4 COLD MOUNTAIN
- 5 KUYA
- 6 MILAN
- 7 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
- 8 HAUNTED MANSION
- 9 SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
- 10 RUNAWAY JURY
- 11 U-BELT
- 12 GHOSTHOUSE

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- 4 MILAN
- 5 CHASING LIBERTY
- 6 KUYA
- 7 RESERVED
- 8 IN THE CUT

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- 2 WISHING STAIRS
- 3 MILAN
- 4 CHASING LIBERTY

SM MEGAMALL

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- 2 BONE SNATCHER
- 3 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
- 4 DUPLEX
- 5 RUNAWAY JURY
- 6 LOST IN TRANSLATION
- 7 U-BELT
- 8 KUYA
- 9 MILAN
- 10 COLD MOUNTAIN
- 11 GHOSTHOUSE
- 12 WATER DEMON

SM CINEMA TUTUBAN

- 1 DUPLEX
- 2 U-BELT
- 3 MILAN
- 4 KUYA

SM CITY MANILA

- 1 RING: THE SPIRAL
- 2 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
- 3 CHASING LIBERTY
- 4 DUPLEX
- 5 BONE SNATCHER
- 6 RUNAWAY JURY
- 7 U-BELT
- 8 WATER DEMON
- 9 MILAN
- 10 GHOSTHOUSE
- 11 COLD MOUNTAIN
- 12 KUYA

SM CITY DAVAO

- 1 CHASING LIBERTY
- 2 MAGIC KITCHEN
- 3 MILAN
- 4 MEMENTO MORI
- 5 DUPLEX
- 6 HAUNTED MANSION

SM CITY PAMPANGA

- 1 KUYA
- 2 DUPLEX
- 3 CHASING LIBERTY
- 4 21 GRAMS
- 5 HAUNTED MANSION
- 6 MILAN

- 1 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE
11:50 FS/12:20 MF/3:00/5:40/8:20/10:30 LFS/11:00 LMF/1:10 END
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ZELLWEGER in classic white

Oscar colors ...

From page A27

rings were a big favorite with the stars, as were his bracelets, wore in stacks by several stars.

Stunning in black

While black is usually always a safe bet for some awards attendees, actress Liv Tyler's stunning black Givenchy seemed to stand out in sharp contrast to the colors.

Lucrecia Perez, who did the music for the nominated documentary "Balseros," wore a head full of neon multi-colored dreadlocks, while Katja Esson, director and producer of a

"FerryTales," nominated for best documentary on a short subject, wore an orange top accompanied by a brightly tied skirt.

Classic white was also worn by some luminaries like best supporting actress winner Renee Zellweger, who wore a Carolina Herrera strapless gown and Cartier jewelry.

"It feels like old Hollywood, the glamour of old Hollywood and I kind of wanted to be part of that," Zellweger said backstage on Sunday.

Sexy glam

While there were no outfits reminiscent of a "Janet Jackson" Super Bowl moment, Frederic Fekkai, hairstylist to the stars, said many stars intended to look glamorous as well as sexy.

As in years past, many of the stars wore million-dollar couture, outfits lent gratis for the day by the world's top designers. Designers compete for the privilege of lending their pieces to stars on the theory that a picture translates into millions of dollars in free promotion and sales.

Many stars, fearful of criticism from the likes of Joan Rivers on her popular E! Network pre-show, now hire stylists to help them select the right look and avoid a fashion faux pas that could reverberate for years, such as in the case of Bjork's "swan" dress in 2001.

Many of the men appeared to duck the traditional black tuxedo on Sunday, sporting dark blue or black suits with conventional ties rather than bow-ties, or no ties at all. Reuters

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mona lisa smile
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Oscar colors: Flesh-tone, classic white, regal black

HOLLYWOOD—Flesh was in fashion at the Oscars, but not in the way that would make censors delay the telecast.

Flesh-tone gowns that shimmered in the sun with the help of beaded crystals or gold and silver ornaments were worn by many of the celebrities attending the gala, including best actress nominee Charlize Theron, who looked stunningly beautiful in a gown designed by Gucci.

Crystals

Supporting actress nominee Naomi Watts' skin-toned Versace sparkled with crystals while designer Vera Wang's own gown was punctuated by a big gold-metal leaf brooch.

Best supporting actress nominee Patricia Clarkson also wore the flesh-tone shimmering look and singer Alison Krauss' skin-toned gown was accessorized with \$2 million Stuart Weitzman stiletto sandals with over 500 Kwiat diamonds.

Vivid contrast

From pastels to bold shades of the rainbow, color came back with a vengeance at the Oscars, Hollywood's ultimate black-tie and often black dress affair.

It was in vivid contrast to the last two years, when war in Iraq and the Sept. 11 attacks darkened the mood of the country and the "red carpet" procession.

Catherine Zeta-Jones wore red, as did supporting actress nominee Shohreh Aghdashloo, who proudly explained that her beautifully fitted gown was designed by an Iranian designer.

Dark, royal

"I wanted to be in something a little dark but royal," said pregnant best supporting actress nominee Marcia Gay Harden, sporting a royal blue gown.

This year's red carpet—one of the world's most watched fashion events, and the official start to the Oscars—provided glimpses of award show regulars like Nicole Kidman, sporting a pale green Chanel gown with a ruffled neckline and train, and "Lost In Translation" star Scarlett Johansson in a bright green couture gown.

Diamonds

Many of the actresses wore their hair pinned up in glamorous "up-dos" or softly curled, reminiscent of the golden era of Hollywood, punctuated by shaded, dangling diamonds.

"The key words in fashion this year is light, airy, feminine. It's the same thing with the jewelry," said Carol Brodie, a spokeswoman for jeweler Harry Winston.

Winston's long stiletto diamond ear-

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Bida ng ukay-ukay. Bonzgo siya 'day!



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Samantha Morton
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR
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Jim Sheridan, Naomi Sheridan & Kirsten Sheridan

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OPENS MARCH 10 EXCLUSIVELY AT GLORIETTA 4 CINEMAS

Tommy Lee Jones Cate Blanchett

THE MISSING

How far would you go, how much would you sacrifice to get back what you have lost?

From Ron Howard and Brian Grazer, the Oscar-winning director-producer team of A BEAUTIFUL MIND comes THE MISSING, an action-filled suspense thriller and a powerful drama of love, forgiveness and redemption.

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MTRCB Rating: Restricted 13 (R-13)

MTRCB R-13 Strictly for 13 years of age and up

Ghost story is "scary as hell"

Vengeful ghost in 'GOTHIKA'

"Because she is dead doesn't mean she's gone..."

Academy Award®-winner Halle Berry stars in Columbia Pictures' spine-chilling horror thriller as Dr. Miranda Grey, a criminal psychologist who awakens to find herself a patient in her own mental institution with no memory of the murder she's apparently committed. Haunted by a vengeful female ghost, Miranda must find out if she is being led farther from her sanity or closer to the truth. **GOTHIKA** also stars Robert Downey Jr. and Penelope Cruz.

Bring the barkada & scream all you can! OPENS TOMORROW!

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Louie C. Camino

ALONA ALEGRE SAYS

'Ronnie confronted Cabaluna because of me'

By Marinel R. Cruz

A GRAPHIC picture of sexy actress Alona Alegre published in a sexy magazine was why opposition presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. confronted journalist Franklin Cabaluna in 1967.

This is according to Alegre,

who wants to be on record regarding the incident. She said the actor was not reacting to something negative that Cabaluna had written when he confronted the editor.

She told INQUIRER Entertainment in an interview last Sunday that she was with Poe and Ca-

baluna, now managing editor of Insider, at the time of the incident.

Alegre said the confrontation occurred after she asked Poe to talk to Cabaluna who had published revealing pictures of herself in a magazine called Pic, which Cabaluna was then editing.

She said Poe had confronted Cabaluna during a party organized by the Philippine Movie

Press Club (PMPC) in 1967 because of the pictures.

Topless pictures

Alegre's brother, Lou Salvador Jr. is married to Poe's sister, Martha Genevieve.

Alegre said Cabaluna had asked her to pose topless for the magazine, the Philippine counterpart of Playboy.

"I agreed because he promised

there would be no breast exposures, just silhouette shots," Alegre stressed. "In fact, when he saw that I was still hesitant to do it, he told me not to worry because a female photographer (Cabaluna's wife Nelia Tan) would take the pictures.

Shocked

"But when the magazine came out, I was so shocked to see that my nipples were exposed in the picture. I don't mind doing it for the movies because at least it was not a still shot. But the magazine was there for everyone to see.

"I cried a lot because of that. I was really hurt. When (Ronnie and I) saw each other at the party, I told (him) what had happened. I cried in front of him. I told him to talk to Franklin."

But Cabaluna insisted that Poe's picking him up from the PMPC party has nothing to do with Alegre.

Not true

"While it's true that she might have some 'tampo' (bad feelings) about me when I published" her photos, "it's not true that that was the cause of Poe's having an ax to grind against me."

Cabaluna on Monday told Inquirer Entertainment that Pic Magazine did not exist yet at the time of the incident.

"It began its publication only in the late '70s and was closed by Martial Law in September 1972," he said.

A very drunk Poe had shown up at the PMPC party to "abduct" Cabaluna, the journalist said in a press conference held last week at the Club Filipino.

He said Poe brought him to a parking lot of a restaurant near the Manila Zoo and berated him for something "negative" he had written about the actor in his Kaleidoscope column in Daily Star.

He said he had described Poe's acting in a recent film as "lousy" and "wooden."

According to reports, this angered Poe, who had accosted Cabaluna at the party and had urinated on him.

"There was neither bugbugan or ihian," said Cabaluna. "What occurred was his threatening to bury me alive and his, yes, pissing—on the acacia tree while we were walking."

Not drunk

Alegre's version was that "Ronnie called (Cabaluna), and told him 'Halika, sama ka sa amin ni Alona. Kakaasapin ka namin (Come with Alona and me. We want to talk to you.) So we left the party. Ronnie (Poe's nickname) was driving. I was seated in the middle while Franklin was seated at my right."

She said Poe had not been drunk at the time of the incident. The actor was not the type of person who would pick up a fight when he was drunk, she added.

"You won't be able to make Ronnie drive if he were drunk," Alegre pointed out. "At saka, si Ronnie mahilig lang magsermon 'pag lasing (He only wants to give lectures when he's drunk)."

Alegre said Poe had parked the car by the Manila Zoo because he wanted to urinate.

"Franklin said, 'ako rin (me too).' So they both stepped out," Alegre recalled.



ALEGRE: I was there and they were both smiling when they returned to the car. PDI PHOTO

"I got out of the car, too. But when I saw them peeing, I turned my back, walked away and stood by the car door."

"I don't know why he said he was kneeling down because I never saw him kneeling down," Alegre said. "When they were done, they walked calmly toward the car."

"If Ronnie hurt Franklin Cabaluna in any way, why were they talking and smiling to each other when they got back to the car?"

She said Poe spoke to Cabaluna calmly.

"Franklin was silent because he knew it was his fault. Ronnie asked him, 'bakit mo ginawa 'yon kay Alona. May pamilya 'yan (Why did you do that to Alona. She already has a family). You have to respect women. Bakit ganon?"

Cabaluna claimed Alegre had remained in Poe's car, which was parked some distance away from the acacia tree, when the actor threatened to bury him alive.

Thankful

"So, she couldn't have heard what Poe told me," Cabaluna said.

But he was thankful that Alegre was there, "because I don't know what could have happened to me if she were not there. There was no other person at the site at that unholy time (about 3 or 4 a.m.)." Cabaluna said.

Alegre said Cabaluna was sent to revive a 36-year-old complaint against Poe to discredit the actor.

"I forgave him," she said, referring to Cabaluna and his publishing her pictures.

"I didn't even press charges. Why is he doing this now? I think he's being used to discredit Ronnie. It's unfair. Ronnie was so nice to him."

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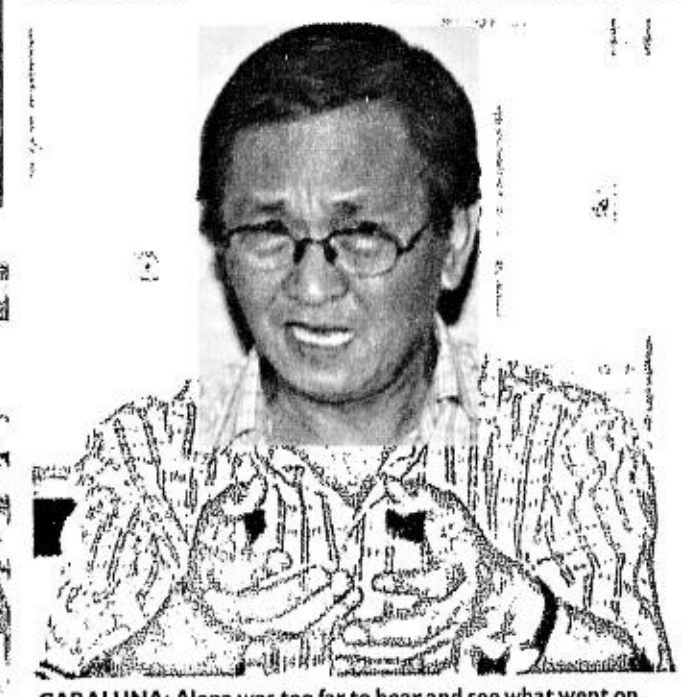
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More movies on page B4



CABALUNA: Alona was too far to hear and see what went on.

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Editor Raul O. Marcelo
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BUSINESS

Gov't rejects all bids on Treasury bills

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 56.28 = \$1

As of 5 p.m., March 1, 2004

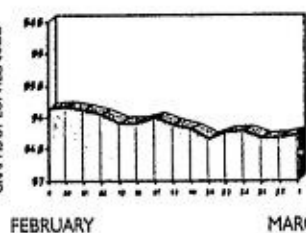
₱ 109.23 = \$1

As of 5 p.m., March 1, 2004

GOLD: \$393.30-393.80

per ounce Hong Kong, Feb. 27, 2004

GRAPHS BY LUVILLARCO



Stocks end higher

STOCKS ended marginally higher yesterday, with the "B" shares of power distributor Meralco leading gainers on good earnings prospects, traders said.

The 33-share composite index rose 1.28 points, or 0.09 percent, to 1,484.46. It has gained 2.92 percent since the start of the year.

In the broader market, gainers outpaced losers 23 to 21 while 25 issues were unchanged.

The "B" shares of Manila Electric Co., the country's largest power distributor, gained 6.25 percent to P34. The firm is expected to release its 2003 earnings in the next few days.

"I think that buying on Meralco 'B' shares is earnings related—the firm rising back from the ashes," said Astro del Castillo, managing director of First Grade Holdings.

Meralco, 25-percent owned by the government and 23 percent by Spanish utility Union Fenosa SA, has forecast net income of about P1 billion for last year after a net loss of P2 billion in 2002.

Meralco's 2004 profit is expected to surge to P4.16 billion, according to analysts polled by Reuters Research, due to an expected improvement in the economy and increased demand for electricity ahead of the May 10 elections.

Other gainers were Globe Telecom, up P5 or 0.56 percent to P890, and Pilipino Telephone Corp. (Piltel), up 2 centavos or 1.28 percent to P1.58.

Traders said Piltel, 45-percent owned by Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT), was up due to persistent talk it would merge with sister firm Smart Communications.

Reuters

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU of Treasury rejected bids for treasury bills yesterday as banks demanded an increase in average yields by 54.6 to 148.5 basis points from the previous auction due to rising political risks ahead of May's election.

"We are just reiterating our stand that we will not allow interest rates to be affected by the speculation on the peso," National Treasurer Mina Figueroa told reporters after the auction.

Figueroa earlier said the government was being careful not to allow an unreasonable increase in interest rates because this might dampen the mood of the private sector to borrow funds to finance significant business operations.

An increase in the rates of government securities normally trig-

ger a rise in bank lending rates.

With the rejection of all the bids, the yield for the 91-day bills will remain at 6.435 percent. The yield for the 182-day debt paper will be kept at 7.834 percent, while that of the 364 bills will remain at 8.384 percent.

The Treasury also rejected bids for five-year treasury bonds last week as investors demanded an average yield of 12.065 percent, a large leap from the 10.87 percent at the previous auction.

Figueroa attributed the high bids

to "political noise" in the run-up to the national election on May 10.

The government uses the proceeds from treasury bill and bond auctions to help fund its budget deficit.

If the Treasury had accepted the bids yesterday, the average yield of the 91-day bill would have risen to 6.981 percent, while the 182-day bill would have jumped to 8.715 percent. For the 364-day bill, banks submitted bids for an average yield of 9.869 percent.

The Treasury received tenders of P1.36 billion for the P3 billion worth of 91-day bills on offer. For the P3.5 billion in 182-day bills, tenders were P1.25 billion. Tenders for the P4.5 billion worth of 364-day bills were P1.21 billion.

Traders said yields of treasury bills have risen 70 basis points in

the secondary market since last week, while treasury bonds leapt as much as 170 basis points.

Philippine treasury bonds have maturities of two years to 25 years.

Dealers said fears of mass unrest by supporters of film star Fernando Poe Jr if he is disqualified from running for president have affected local financial markets.

The peso closed at 56.28 to a dollar yesterday, near its record low of 56.35. The central bank has warned it was ready to defend the peso by hiking the reserve requirement for commercial banks to 25 percent to 30 percent from the current 19 percent.

Figueroa said that with the rejection of the bids, the government may look for alternative sources of borrowings.

LexMedia launches P500-M printing facility

By Ronnel W. Domingo

TRADE Secretary Cesar V. Purisima yesterday said the local printing industry was given a boost toward international competitiveness with the launch of LexMedia Digital Corp.'s P500-million facility in Laguna.

Purisima, who led the inauguration rites, at the same time said the tariff structure affecting the industry should be reviewed for possible revisions that would help make the country a printing destination in Asia.

"This Print Town plant is a big leap for the local industry because it is using the latest technology," he said.

Print Town's machines include a Heidelberg webpress

that can make 120,000 copies of a 160-page magazine in 33 hours; a Kolbus bindery that can bind 140,000 magazines a day, and a stitcher that can assemble up to 8,000 books an hour.

Purisima added that the investment of LexMedia, an all-Filipino company and member of the Print Town Group, was a vote of confidence for the country "despite all the political noise that is going on."

Print Town has two other units—newspaper printers FEP Printing Corp. and Alliance Media Printing Inc.—which print a total of 10 titles, including the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Cebu Daily News, Asian Wall Street Journal and International Herald

LEXMEDIA/B3



SECRETARY Purisima leads the ceremonial switch on of the new printing facility in Laguna. Looking on are (from left) PDI Chair Marixi Prieto, LexMedia's Valdes and Bryan Ng, LexMedia general manager.

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Heathen agenda

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III



THESE business people are putting their money where their mouths are. In fact, the money amounts to some P100 million—cash.

And so I guess that, since P100 million is a lot of money even by Jose Pidal's standards, they must really have some pretty big mouths.

Anyway, there are only four of them, namely former Finance Secretary Jose Pardo, Washington Sycip, Manuel Pangilinan and Ramon Ang.

Now, when you talk of big business in this country, you cannot possibly get any bigger than those names.

FOR instance, Sycip is sought even by the governments of other countries in Asia for advice. He is a founder of the country's first multinational business, the SGV Group.

For his part, although he has his own businesses, Ang is a professional executive running San Miguel, which is only the biggest private business in the country today.

Pangilinan provides the brains behind the First Pacific Group, which is the biggest single stockholder in PLDT, which in turn is just the biggest, period.

THOSE top honchos submitted an important document to all the presidential candidates, probably even including a certain Eddie Gil.

By the way, the guy claims to be the George Soros of the Philippines, a sort of financial genius. And I am not even laughing right now. Honest.

Anyway, called the First 100 Days, the document seeks to take advantage of the goodwill, plus the optimism, which every new administration usually enjoys.

In other words, it is a blitz-type business agenda for the next President of the Republic, whoever he, she, it or they may be, but preferably a Filipino. Oops!

HONESTLY, when I heard about the 100-day business agenda, I expected it to be a lot of whining, a veritable rundown of all business grumbling and moaning.

And so I thought that, as usual, it would perhaps contain a lot of those motherhood statements on what the country ought to do. Was I wrong!

Actually, the four convenors of the 100-day business agenda had, for its centerpiece, a concrete program with hard cash.

Together they put up P100 million to start a micro-finance project to help the poor find livelihood. And I thought it was just all talk.

Who was it again who said that we should not ask what the country could do for us, but rather ask what we could do for our country? I forgot, but I am sure it was not Eddie Gil.

ONE surely difficult item in the 100-day business agenda, however, is the proposal to legalize ... well, *jueteng*.

If it sounds familiar, it is because legalized *jueteng* is the same issue which got the man named Band ... Wrist Band ... into trouble, if not the hospital "slash" jail.

Still, as the paper clearly stated, if the convenors could have their way, they would rather eradicate the numbers game. You wish, boss!

Ever since I can remember, which is a long time ago, the government has been promising us that it would jail every Tom, Dick and Harry called *jueteng* lord.

Every administration failed, of course, including this cute administration of Gloriaeta, featuring Interior Secretary Jose "Squatter Law" Lina, who was made famous by the so-called (stupid) Lina Law.

EVEN before the Spaniards arrived in the Philippines to try to convince everybody to gamble with cards instead, we were already playing the numbers game *jueteng*.

The folklore has it that the game came all the way from China, making its first appearance in Pangasinan, the territory of a pirate known as Limahong.

Come to think of it, the name of the game is

a dead giveaway. It sounds as Chinese to me as *lumpiang shanghai*, *pancit canton* and *Gokongwei*.

WHETHER the religious guys like it or not, *jueteng* has existed in the real world for the longest time, and it is most likely going to stay around much longer than all of us.

For I can already see the opposition to the bright idea, coming from the religious groups, mostly the individual priests of the Catholic church.

To them, most probably, the 100-day document from the business sector comes out as evil and immoral and heathen. What's that—a heathen agenda?

BUT as I was saying before I was rudely interrupted by Edsa II, the meddlesome Supreme Court and Jose Pidal, we have to be pragmatic like most other countries.

Malaysia did it in the 1980s, when Mohamad Mahathir came into the picture, who used the revenue from the numbers game for that country's infrastructure.

And don't be surprised, because even rich countries like Japan (*pachingco* land), Australia and the United States also earn infrastructure money from gaming.

Look, even Italy makes billions of dollars from gaming, which then uses the money to build roads and airports serving places like the Vatican. That's where the Pope lives, by the way.

WE just have to redirect the flow of the money away from the *jueteng* lords, and their paid backers in the government.

They are none other than the provincial commanders, the police chiefs, the governors, the mayors and even the barangay captains.

In other words, *jueteng* only gets to corrupt everybody except the parish priest and I am not even sure about that.

Legalizing *jueteng* can put the money in the national coffers instead, which we can then use for infrastructure.

Believe me, there is no other way for us to make more roads. Because without the roads, we cannot do anything else except perhaps make more babies.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 1, 2004)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Bank of the Phil. Islands	46	46	45.5	45.5	117,000
Citystate Savings Bank	16.25	16.25	16.25	16.25	2,400
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	38.5	38.5	38.5	38.5	15,200
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.56	0.56	0.55	0.56	410,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	25	25.5	25	25.5	266,300
Philippine National Bank	23.5	23.5	23.5	23.5	8,900
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	12.5	12.5	12.5	12.5	1,000
Security Bank Corp.	16.5	17	16.5	17	1,600
Union Bank of the Phil.	25.5	25.5	25.5	25.5	400
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	30,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2000	2000	1995	1995	470
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.34	1.34	1.32	1.32	108,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	160	160	155	155	1,850
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1500	1510	1500	1510	1,710
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	23	23.25	23	23.25	2,100
Globe Telecom Inc.	895	890	885	890	21,420
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.041	0.046	0.041	0.046	1,800,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.037	0.038	0.036	0.037	2,200,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	6,000
Philippine Tel. Corp.	1.56	1.62	1.52	1.58	4,463,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	970	970	960	960	377,890
Ivantage Corp.	0.35	0.35	0.35	0.35	20,000
Philweb Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	3,900,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	19.5	20.25	19.5	20	75,600
Manila Electric Co. B	31.5	34	31.5	34	1,594,500
Petron Corp.	3.1	3.15	3.1	3.15	1,209,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.94	0.94	0.92	0.94	560,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.26	1.26	1.26	1.26	50,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	3.15	3.15	3.15	3.15	160,000
William, Gothong & Abotiz	2	2	2	2	353,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Union Cement Corp.	1.34	1.34	1.3	1.3	845,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.2	1,000
Julabee Foods Corp.	18.75	19.25	18.75	18.75	190,800
RPM Corp.	0.63	0.63	0.63	0.63	30,000
San Miguel Corp. A	57	57	56	56.5	60,500
San Miguel Corp. B	69	69	69	69	24,700
Universal Robina Corp.	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	20,000
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	150,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdq A	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	50,000
Ayala Corp.	5.9	6.1	5.9	6.1	1,432,000
Abotiz Equity Ventures	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	140,000
Ajo Ret Holdings Inc.	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	900,000
Alcon Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	1,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.68	1.68	1.6	1.6	50,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.59	0.61	0.59	0.6	11,710,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	0.23	0.24	0.23	0.24	700,000
Fit-Estate Corp.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	10,000
Fininvest Dev. Corp.	1	1.02	1	1.02	575,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	23.5	24.5	23.5	24	639,400
MacroAsia Corp.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	150,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.02	1.04	1.02	1.04	4,685,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.27	0.29	0.27	0.27	7,400,000
Prime Onco Phils. Inc.	0.135	0.135	0.12	0.12	60,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.32	0.33	0.32	0.33	380,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.52	0.52	0.5	0.5	300,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	23.25	23.5	23.25	23.5	379,400
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	267,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5,541,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	100,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.135	0.135	0.13	0.13	1,110,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	520,000
Fininvest Land Inc.	1.06	1.06	1.04	1.04	1,995,000
City & Land Developers	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	1,000,000
Fit-Estate Land Inc.	0.175	0.22	0.175	0.22	1,050,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	6.1	6.1	6.1	6.1	6,701,000
MINING					
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	10,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	120,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	7,000,000
OIL					
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.17	10,000

CURRENCIES

March 1, 2004	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.800448251	1.000000	56.3320
Japan	Yen	0.007338	0.009167	0.5164
United Kingdom	Pound	1.495638	1.858500	105.2563
Hongkong	Dollar	0.102838	0.128475	7.2373
Switzerland	Franc	0.634471	0.792644	44.6512
Canada	Dollar	0.600081	0.749681	42.2310
Singapore	Dollar	0.471629	0.589206	33.1912
Australia	Dollar	0.617249	0.771129	43.4392
Bahrain	Dinar	2.123261	2.652590	149.4257
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.213453	0.266667	15.0219
Brunei	Dollar	0.470243	0.587475	33.0936
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000094	0.000118	0.0066
Thailand	Baht	0.020383	0.025465	1.4345
UAE	Dirham	0.217928	0.272257	15.3368
Euro	Euro	1	1.249300	70.3756
Argentina/Peso	0.274126	0.342466	19.2918	19.3315
Brazil	REAL	0.274691	0.343171	19.3315
Denmark	Kroner	0.134218	0.167678	9.4456
India	Rupee	0.017701	0.022114	1.2457
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.210672	0.263193	14.8262
Mexico	New Peso	0.072406	0.090457	5.0956
New Zealand	Dollar	0.548478	0.685213	38.5994
Norway	Kroner	0.114329	0.142831	8.0460
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013957	0.017437	0.9823
South Africa	Rand	0.12137	0.151628	8.5415
Korea	Won	0.00068	0.000849	0.0478
Sweden	Kroner	0.108327	0.135333	7.6236
Syria	Pound	0.018196	0.022732	1.2805
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024095	0.030102	1.6957
Venezuela	Bollvar	0.000418	0.000522	0.0294

JPMorgan reduces weighting on RP sovereign dollar bonds

HONG KONG—JPMorgan has reduced Philippine sovereign dollar bonds to "modest underweight" from "market weight" in its Asia Credit Index model portfolio due to political risk and the possibility of further negative rating actions.

"Preelection noise has begun to rear its ugly head," the US investment bank said in a client note dated Feb. 27.

It also said an outlook switch to negative from stable by Stan-

dard & Poor's and Fitch Ratings, prompted by a deterioration in fundamentals, was not inconceivable.

Last month, ratings agency Moody's Investors Service cut its sovereign rating on the Philippines by one notch to Ba2, saying unstable election-year politics threatened to worsen the country's budget woes. It maintains a negative outlook.

Both S&P and Fitch rate the

Philippines at "BB" with a stable outlook.

However, JPMorgan said factors such as renewed strength in the broader emerging market and lower near-term supply risks were supportive of Philippine sovereign debt. "We recommend keeping an eye on tactical bets whenever the opportunity exists."

JPMorgan recommended to investors to take profits and switch out of Philippine sovereign dollar

bonds due in 2025 to the country's newly issued 2011 bonds.

"We continue to favor the intermediate part of the curve relative to the wings, given decent (yield) pick-up over short-end and less volatility compared with the long-end."

Philippine '25s were quoted at 502 basis points over comparable (bps) US Treasuries, while Philippine '11s were traded at 517 bps over.

Reuters

MPC swings to profit after 2 yrs of losses

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

METRO Pacific Corp. (MPC), a subsidiary of First Pacific of Hong Kong, posted a net profit of P56.5 million last year, reversing a two-year losing streak.

MPC registered a net loss of about P21 billion in 2001 and P11.9 billion in 2002.

David Nugent, MPC vice-president for corporate communications told the INQUIRER that the group was aiming to sustain profitability this year through a number of initiatives.

Out of its debt of P12.9 billion, the company was able to settle

P12.1 billion.

Other income last year stood at P542 million arising largely from one-time gains from the completion of various debt reduction and restructuring exercises.

Consolidated net revenue amounted to only P3.7 billion last year, down from P5.9 billion in the previous year. This was due to the reduction of MPC's stake in Bonifacio Land Corp.

Operating expenses were lower by 44.6 percent at P613.4 million, compared with P1.1 billion in 2002.

MPC set aside non-cash provisions of P8.7 billion in 2002 to cover expected losses from the

sale of its shares in BLC. Another P1.4 billion in non-cash provision was also made against carrying values of various property assets, due to the weak property market.

MPC reduced its stake in BLC to 14.7 percent from 50.4 percent. In the meantime, the company reported that net financing charges fell 57.9 percent to P620.2 million last year from P1.5 billion in 2002.

Operating profit also slid to P94.6 million from P363.58 million. Net non-recurring gains of P541.9 million were posted last year due to debt reduction.

Looking at the operations of its units, Landco Pacific Corp. reported a 32.6 percent increase in its net profit to P57.8 million as it increased revenue to P686.6 mil-

lion. Operating expenses climbed 6.8 percent to P168.8 million due to the expansion of residential resorts Punta Fuego and Leisure Farms.

Nugent said the company was in the process of developing a 70,000-square-meter property in Naga City into a shopping mall. Pacific Plaza Towers registered a higher loss of P87.3 million from P44 million in 2002.

Waiting for the Supreme Court

INVESTORS are confused over 2 surveys, which appeared on successive days and gave completely different results. The first showed that GMA had overtaken FPJ by 3 percent and the market jumped 17 points. The next day, another survey showed FPJ far ahead with an increased percentage of the votes and the market drifted lower. Any estate agent will tell you that it is all a matter of 3 factors: location, location, location.

The first survey was carried out in GMA's hometown while the second took place in Mindanao, in a cinema, showing an FPJ movie. To test this theory, my wife conducted her own survey in our street, assuming that I was eligible to run for President. The results were Mr. Bearbull 98 percent, GMA one percent, FPJ one percent. The only thing both surveys agreed upon was that both Eddy's were wasting their time. Some people complained that having two candidates starting with Eddy is confusing. Personally, I find it edifying.

Probably because I was watching Christmas Carol with my daughter, I had a strange dream about the election. The spirit of "Election still to come" showed me what might happen. First FPJ would be disqualified as not being a natural born Filipino. This would leave GMA as a shoo-in because the masses were unlikely to transfer all their votes to PING as they did not have the same sense of identification with him. A transfer of 75 percent would leave him well behind.

Then documents would be presented showing that PING was actually the son of Mao Tse Tung and was therefore Chinese. Roco would be charged with wearing floral shirts, which are in breach of the Geneva Convention. Just before the election, Brother Eddie would have a vision, as a result of which he would withdraw from campaigning and tell every-

Mr. BEARBULL



Ron Nathan

one to vote for GMA. As for Eddie Gil (no relation to Pedro Gil), he would be deported to Czechoslovakia on a trampoline. They would accept him, as they did not mind bouncing Czechs.

In our stock brokerage firm, we have about 50 computers attached to our server by a network so if one gets infected, it could spread like bird flu. Our technical guys decided to call a meeting to teach us about viruses and the danger of opening attachments from unknown sources. I never open them because my wife will not let me have attachments.

Erwin asked if any of us knew anything about Trojans. I immediately took one out of my wallet and waved it around. "Not condoms, you idiot. I am talking about viruses. Why don't you put it on your floppy?" I immediately replied, "If I had a floppy, I would not need a Trojan." That shut him up. Later, I again made another faux pas by saying I thought the ethernet was an anaesthetic, used with chloroform. Oh well, I never pretended to be high tech.

This week, I have no idea what to write about as the market has gone into a coma. On Monday, the Ortigas Center was hit by a brownout because Benpres House, 100 yards away, had forgotten to pay its Meralco bill. As a result, the stock market at Tektite ceased trading, we had no computers or telephones and I could not send out my newsletter. On Tuesday, the market fell asleep, and Wednesday was Edsa Day. There were people everywhere, except at the Edsa Shrine.

On Thursday, the market rose on low volume because of the first survey, and on Friday, it fell on even lower volume because of the second survey. Gross turnover was just over P500 million but large cross sales of SMPH and GLO, plus a few other stocks, reduced the net figure to below P250 million. Hardly any stocks moved by more than one or two fluctuations and there were no features. I think the market will remain like this until after the election. The only active stock is TEL and yesterday, it accounted for 61 percent of all trades.

MERALCO is rising ahead of a meeting on Friday and FPH is going up because it holds 20 percent of MERALCO. The results of FPH are due, possibly next week, and a sizeable dividend declaration is expected, according to our Research Department. They have a price target of P31, which is P7 above the current price. As it happens, it was also a BUY a couple of days ago on my degree of risk indicator. If the shares can break P24.25, the next resistance level is P27.50.

We are awaiting the fate of FPJ, the decision by CalPERS as to whether it will keep or sell its \$67 million in investments in the Philippines, and whether MERALCO will get its 12-centavo rate hike restored. In the meantime, other Asean central banks are selling their currencies like mad to stop them appreciating against a very weak dollar. Japan has been selling vast quantities of yen for months in an effort to protect its exporters. Now, South Korea is selling the won, Thailand is selling the baht and Singapore the dollar, in a joint effort to hold their currencies steady.

In Europe, France and Germany are fed up with the appreciation of the euro, up from a low of 0.85 to a high of 1.28. That is 50 percent, and they are now implementing sanctions against the United

States for unfair trading practices. The pound sterling has gone from 1.30 to an 11-year high of 1.90. The Philippine government is fortunate that it does not have this problem as the peso fell to its worst level ever. Theoretically, the Philippines should be the most competitive exporting country on the planet.

Inflation is likely to rise from 3.4 percent in January to 3.6 percent in February. By the year's end, it is expected to be between 4 to 5 percent. Interest rates are going up partly to offset inflation and partly to protect the peso. At Monday's treasury auction, all bids for the 91, 182 and 365-day bills were rejected. The banks were asking for 6.98 percent on the benchmark 91-day bill, which would have represented an increase of 55 basis points. This is excessive, and the Treasury had already told the banks that they would only accept bids up to 6.75 percent. The Treasury is now planning to issue bills with a maturity of only one-month, starting in April. Interest rates will go higher but at a controlled rate so do not invest in long-dated bonds. Put your funds either in the short one-month bill or on deposit with your bank, whichever gives you the best net return. Later in the year, you will obtain more attractive returns.

With crude oil prices reaching \$36 a barrel, thanks to Opec cuts, there could well be another hike in gasoline prices, especially as the peso is so weak. With buses and jeepneys going on strike for higher fares, the government is going to have its work cut out, trying to restrain the vehicle drivers and the oil companies, who have to pass on the increase. All these factors are likely to weigh on the market and keep down local participation.

My hotmail is always going off-line, sometimes for 24 hours, so kindly send your messages to bearbull2010@yahoo.com, which I use as back-up.

GMA-7 shareholders favor IPO over direct stake sale

By Clarissa S. Batino

SHAREHOLDERS of GMA Network Inc. are at odds as to whether the company should sell to a strategic partner or do an initial public offering to raise funds.

INQUIRER sources said there had been talk that Manuel Pangilinan, chair of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. Inc. had been trying to convince the Jimenez family, which owns 35 percent of GMA, to sell to the PLDT group.

But the controlling owners, the Gozon and Duavit families that account for 65 percent of the company, were setting their sights on an IPO instead, the sources said.

GMA is looking at an IPO by next year, once the political situation shall have stabilized, according to another company official. The company earlier said it had no need for fresh funds right now as it expected net earnings last year to have hit about P1 billion.

"The majority owners of GMA Network Inc. reiterates their earlier statement that they are not selling their shares to PLDT or Smart or any other interested parties. GMA Network is not for sale. We hope that all speculations surrounding this false issue end," GMA-7 corporate communications head Butch Raquel said.

According to Raquel, the PLDT group may have talked with the Jimenez family. "But if indeed the Jimenezes would sell their stake, PLDT would only acquire a minority stake," he said.

"GMA's majority owners have not received any such offer or proposal (from PLDT), much less any intention to acquire a majority stake in the company," Raquel said.

The majority shareholders also have a right of first refusal on the stake of the Jimenez family and this could foil Pangilinan's plan to buy into GMA.

Pangilinan earlier said that PLDT was still interested in the television busi-

ness. He admitted to have held exploratory talks with Zoe Broadcasting Co. of evangelist Eddie Villanueva but refused to elaborate.

PLDT's bid to acquire a controlling stake in GMA Network Inc. in 2001 failed to materialize due to pricing and valuation differences. The dominant carrier said, at that time, that it needed to focus on bringing down its debt instead of financing an acquisition.

Pangilinan, however, considered television an integral part of PLDT's convergence strategy—to deliver audio, text and video services using all possible forms of media.

LexMedia . . .

From page B1

Tribune.

The trade chief noted that many local publishers were forced to go to Singapore or Hong Kong for printing services because locally available technology did not meet their requirements.

"This practice should stop," he said. "I believe LexMedia (presents the) the best way to put the Philippines in the printing map of the world."

Purisima said the Department of Trade and Industry was working closely with Print Town to make sure that the export market for printing could be developed.

"We need to sit down to look at the tariff structure to make sure that we can correct some of the issues that can affect efforts in developing the export market," he said.

The official said industry players would have to do the review of tariffs and then his department would cooperate with them on actions called for.

In a separate interview, LexMedia president Dennis O. Valdes said the group might call for the removal of the 3-percent tariff on coated paper.

"Nobody is producing coated paper in the country, so no local producer would be hurt if the tariff is removed," Valdes said. "Besides, we want such a move to benefit the entire industry."

The official explained that a 3-percent duty represented huge costs since paper accounted for a big part of a printer's expenses.

"One could be out of the loop with a seemingly low tariff," he said. "The big players in Hong Kong (have the advantage) because the territory is a duty-free port."

Valdes also said that Print Town would also look at tariffs on ink, a significant portion of which is also not produced locally. He said that duties ranged between 10 and 15 percent depending on the kind of ink.

Aside from that, Print Town had applied for an economic zone status and, effectively, for incentives that would help temper the costs of doing business.

For his part, Purisima said he did not see any reason for the group to be denied an ecozone status.

"This type of investment is so big that it has to have an export component. A local company needs to export at least 50 percent of its production to be an ecozone," he explained.



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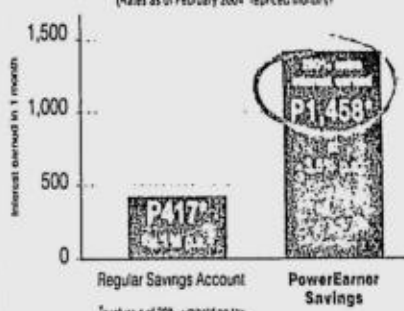
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Ali 2	MILAN
Ali 3	SOMETHINGS GOTTA GIVE
Ali 4	COLD MOUNTAIN
Ali 5	DUPLEX
Ali 6	KUYA
Ali 7	WATER DEMON

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MAXIM	CLOSED
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ODEON-2	BUKID AY BASA / KASIBULAN
ROBEN	BOLD STAR
TANDEM-1	SUGAT
TANDEM-2	KATAWAN MO LANGIT KO
TIMES	SPY / LEGEND OF CHOCODILE

QUEZON CITY	
ACT-1	SENSUAL ISLAND
ACT-2	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
ACT-3	ORIGINAL SIN
ACT-4	HANGGANG KAILAN KA PATAPAT
CORONET A	U-BELT
CORONET B	A MAN APART
QUEZON-1	BERTUDING PUTIK
REMAR	X-MEN 2
REMAR-2	BOLD STAR

NOVA MALL - NOVALICHES CINEMA	
A	U-BELT
B	BURLESK KING

MANDALUYONG CITY	
SHANGRI-LA PLAZA MALL	635-20-79 / 633-78-51 TO 70
CINEMA-1	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED FOR RENOVATION

CAINTA RIZAL	
STA. LUCIA EAST	(681-5401 TO 19)
CINEMA-1	KUYA
CINEMA-2	U-BELT
CINEMA-3	MYSTIC RIVER (RI)
CINEMA-4 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	HAUNTED MANSION
CINEMA-5 (DTS)	RUNAWAY JURY
CINEMA-6	CHASING LIBERTY
CINEMA-7	WISHING STAIRS
CINEMA-8	GUSTO KO SA LALAKI (RI)
CINEMA-9 (DTS)	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
CINEMA-10 (DOLBY DIGITAL)	DUPLEX
CINEMA-11 (SDDS)	COLD MOUNTAIN
CINEMA-12	WATER DEMON
CINEMA-14	GHOST HOUSE
CINEMA-15	MILAN

LORES	
CINEMA-2	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-3	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT

NE CINEMAGIC - CABANATUAN	
(LAS PINAS)	MILAN
CINEMA-1	HAUNTED MANSION
CINEMA-2	CLOSED
CINEMA-4	CLOSED

UNIWIIDE COASTAL MALL	
(PARANAQUE)	SENSUAL ISLAND
CINEMA-1	KAYA KO PERO MASAKIT
CINEMA-2	MEN IN BLACK II
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3 RUNAWAY JURY 11:50, 2:20, 4:50 7:20, 9:50 R-13	4 LOST IN TRANSLATION 12:25, 2:30, 4:35, 6:40 8:45, 10:50 PG-13

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LOST IN TRANSLATION PG13 12:45, 2:55, 5:05, 7:15, 9:25	COLD MOUNTAIN R18 12:25, 3:30, 6:35, 9:40	SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE R13 12:10, 2:40, 5:10, 7:40, 10:10

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2 SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE 10:40, 1:25, 4:10, 6:55, 9:45 PG-13	3 MILAN 11:20, 2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 10:00 DTS	4 COLD MOUNTAIN 10:20, 1:15, 4:10, 7:05, 10:00 DOLBY DIGITAL
5 DUPLEX 10:55, 1:05, 3:15, 5:25, 7:35, 9:45 DOLBY DIGITAL	6 LOST IN TRANSLATION 12:05, 2:15, 4:25, 6:40, 9:00 SDDS	7 U-BELT 11:50, 2:20, 4:50, 7:20, 9:50 DOLBY DIGITAL
8 WATER DEMON 12:30, 2:35, 4:40, 6:50, 9:00 DOLBY DIGITAL	9 KUYA 12:40, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00 DOLBY DIGITAL	10 RUNAWAY JURY 11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50 DOLBY DIGITAL

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1
SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
11:20, 2:00, 4:40, 7:20, 10:00

2
COLD MOUNTAIN
10:10, 1:00, 3:50, 6:40, 9:50
DOLBY DIGITAL

3
MILAN
11:10, 1:50, 4:30, 7:10, 9:50
DOLBY DIGITAL

4
GHOST HOUSE
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DOLBY DIGITAL

5
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DOLBY DIGITAL

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SDDS

7
WATER DEMON
10:40, 12:50, 3:00, 5:10, 7:20, 9:40
DTS

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1
DUPLEX
10:50, 12:50, 3:50, 4:50, 6:50, 9:00
DOLBY DIGITAL

2
COLD MOUNTAIN
10:30, 12:15, 3:00, 5:45, 8:00
SDDS

3
KUYA
11:20, 1:40, 4:00, 6:20, 9:00
DOLBY DIGITAL

4
U-BELT
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DOLBY DIGITAL

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WATER DEMON
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DOLBY DIGITAL

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SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE
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DOLBY DIGITAL

7
MILAN
10:35, 1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 9:00
DTS

8
GHOST HOUSE
10:05, 1:20, 3:55, 6:30, 9:05
DOLBY DIGITAL

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1
DUPLEX
11:25, 1:15, 3:05, 4:55, 6:45, 8:35
DOLBY DIGITAL

2
WATER DEMON
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DOLBY DIGITAL

8
GHOST HOUSE
11:55, 2:40, 5:25, 8:30
DOLBY DIGITAL

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1
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2
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3
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4
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5
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6
21 GRAMS

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1
MILAN

2
U-BELT

3
DUPLEX

4
SOMETHING GOTTA GIVE

5
WATER DEMON

6
KUYA

BACOLOD 441-0458/59

1
DUPLEX

2
HAUNTED MANSION

3
MILAN

4
CHASING LIBERTY

5
KUYA

6
THE GATHERING

ILOILO 336-8070/78

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Benguet Provincial Board, LHC sign MOA for water project

THE PROVINCIAL Board of Benguet and Luzon Hydro Corporation (LHC) recently signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) for the development of the Kayapa Water Diversion Project. Provincial Governor Raul Molintas and LHC chair and Aboitiz Equity Ventures (AEV) chief operating officer Erramon Aboitiz signed the MOA at the Provincial Capitol, La Trinidad, Benguet.

Gov. Molintas thanked LHC for the investment, adding "We also appreciate LHC for being responsible in getting the necessary endorsements from the community and explaining to them the benefits of the project."

The project, with an estimated cost of US\$15 million to \$18 million, will divert 6 cubic meters of water per second and supplement the water requirements as well as increase the annual generation of Luzon Hydro's 70-megawatt Bakun AC hydropower plant. Construction will be completed in 14 months after an initial five-month design phase.

The project involves the construction of two separate weirs at the Poy-Ocan

and Kayapa Rivers, both minor tributaries of the Bakun River. The weirs will divert the water through a series of conveyance lines, a four-kilometer tunnel, and a drop shaft connecting to the existing Bakun AC underground penstock into the power plant located in Alilem, Ilocos Sur. Excess water will be diverted to a new mini hydropower plant that will be constructed adjacent to the Bakun AC.

"This project will definitely help not just our communities but the country as well," said Aboitiz in reference to recent news of an impending power crisis.

Aside from increasing the generation of clean energy that displaces the import of oil and abates the release of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere, the project will also bring key benefits to the community.

The municipality and the province will receive local business and real property taxes from the company's operations.

Barangay Kayapa will receive a Community Development Fund of P1 million for the first year and P0.5 mil-

lion for each subsequent year for 21 years. The most inaccessible Bakun town will also enjoy a new P65-million, 8-kilometer access road from Kayapa Proper to Barangay Amilongan in Ilocos Sur that will increase economic opportunities for the community.

On top of these, LHC will conduct watershed management projects, energize all five sitios of Kayapa, provide employment opportunities to local residents, and assist in various livelihood, education and health-related programs.

The company hopes to proceed with the project on March 2004 upon securing the Environmental Compliance Certificate from the Department Environment and Natural Resources and the FPIC (Free and Prior Informed Consent) from the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples.

LHC is a joint venture between AEV and Pacific Hydro Ltd. of Australia. The 70-megawatt Bakun AC hydropower plant is the first and largest build-operate-transfer hydro project in the Philippines.



'CHEVALIER DANS L'ORDRE NATIONAL DU MERITE'

Shown are awardees Antonio del Rosario (left), past chair, World Energy Council, and Oscar de Venecia (right), past chair and president, Petroleum Association of the Philippines, beaming with happiness and pride after receiving the insignia of the French award from Renee Veyret, French ambassador (center) during the awarding ceremony last Feb. 10, at the residence of the French Ambassador.



MINING PHILIPPINES 2004 CONFERENCE

Held last Feb. 19 to 20, at the Westin Philippine Plaza Hotel, photo shows (from left) Chamber of Mines chair Artemio Disini; Chamber of Mines president Philip Romualdez; with DTI Sec. Cesar Purisima, DENR Sec. Elisea Gozun and Neda Dir. Gen. Romulo Neri as conference keynote speakers. The conference

with the theme 'Towards a Revitalized Mineral and Allied Industries', was attended by both local and foreign delegates, including representatives of the Asean Federation of Mining Association (Afma).



KOLEHIYALAS RULE!

Shown is the successful launch of Kolehiyala Flair Showdown last Jan. 24 at Outback Restaurant in Libis, Quezon City. Left photo shows the seven participants with the project director, Richie Cruz. Right photo shows first placer Apple Baylon, second placer Jenny Leht Velandrez, third placer Charisse Fuentesbela. This event

was produced by UPJPIA and Pinoytender and presented by the New Nescafe Ice, Philippine Daily Inquirer, NU107.5 and BCNY. For those interested to join next year's competition, log on to www.geocities.com/blue_blazer_2004. This event was endorsed by the Department of Tourism and Tesda.

GTBC wish list winners

GLOBE Telecom Business Center (GTBC) spreads more cheer with the announcement of the winners of its wish list raffle promo, where customers who subscribe to a Nokia G-Plan or purchased a Nokia prepaid phone kit at any Globe Telecom Business Center nationwide were given a chance to draw up a wish list of three items from a special telco and lifestyle selection.

The lucky winners are Luzviminda Lagtu, Jovelyn Cuasmasa and Mark Pitero. Each will receive the items on their wish lists.

Lagtu, who hails from Biñan, Laguna, gets a Nokia 6600 phone with wireless clip-on handset, a Nokia 7250i phone with music stand, and a Nokia 3650 unit and digital pen.

A resident of Tantanang, South Cotabato, Cuasmasa wins a Nokia 6600 with wireless clip-on handset, Nokia 7250i with music stand, and a shopping spree worth P25,000 at Marks and Spencer.

Finally, Mark Pitero of San Mateo Rizal, gets to enjoy a Nokia 6600 phone with wireless clip-on handset, a Nokia 3650 unit and a digital pen, plus a shopping spree worth P25,000 at Marks and Spencer.

Winners will be notified by registered mail informing them as to when and where they can claim their prizes.

The wish list raffle promo, which kicked off last year, is one of GTBC's ways of thanking and rewarding its customers.



PUERTO PRINCESA, LGC INK MOA

Puerto Princesa City received an added boost for its environmental programs from the Lina Group of Companies in the signing ceremonies held at the Aturias Hotel. Mayor Edward Hagedorn and the chair of Lina Corporate Services Inc., Alberto Lina, sealed a 10 year relationship that provides an annual grant in the amount of P1 million.



METROBANK, BEA SIGN BCA

The country's largest bank, Metrobank recently signed a Business Cooperation Agreement with the largest independent Hong Kong-based bank, The Bank of East Asia, Limited (BEA). The agreement sets a framework for cooperation between the two banks covering Greater China. Both banks have a strong mutual interest in exploring opportunities for developing business in that vast market. The cooperation framework enables Metrobank to expand its international reach and respond to rising demand from its corporate customers for banking and related services in China. BEA, through its well-established branch network in China, offers a comprehensive range of banking services, including company accounts, RMB/USD loan facilities, remittance, trade finance, project finance, consultancy services, etc. Meanwhile, Metrobank will provide financial services to BEA customers doing business in the Philippines. Photo shows Metrobank president Antonio S. Abacan, Jr. and BEA chair and chief executive David K.P. Li.

0% Interest at the 1st Digital Video Fest in Glorietta 4

DO YOU wish you can record wonderful memories of this year's graduation or summer vacation in your brand new digital video cam and watch them on your new plasma TV?

Now you can, and you can even have these high-tech gadgets at absolutely 0% interest when you visit Automatic Centre's Digital Video Fest!

Ongoing until March 11, the first-ever digital appliance exhibit at the ground floor of Glorietta 4, Ayala Center in Makati showcases the best and latest video products you've been looking for. Buy the hottest slim and flat digital cameras or video cams in time for your summer vacation at 0% interest. Aside from cameras,

choose from LCD monitors, plasma TVs and projection TVs for the perfect graduation gift. And you can have all of these absolutely interest-free!

Plus, here's an offer you can't resist: a 42" plasma TV for only P199,999 that's available at 0% interest for 12 months! Plus, premium items at the sales exhibit when you buy projection TVs.

What are you waiting for? Don't miss this rare opportunity to experience the whole range of digital video and digital photography today! Record family moments and more digitally! Come and visit the Digital Video Fest and get the best deals on amazing video products. All major credit cards accepted.

Microwarehouse workshop

MICROWAREHOUSE, the leading distributor of networking and mobile computing products, holds the "Networking and Mobile Computing Technology Workshop" today at the Hotel Intercontinental Grand Ballroom, from 12 p.m. to 6 p.m. Admission is free but limited so register now. There are 3 ways to register: online at www.microwarehouse.com.ph/workshop.php3; e-mail name, designation, company, address and telephone numbers to jean@microwarehouse.com.ph and hope@microwarehouse.com.ph; or fax to 638-6790, 638-6792 or 636-3720.

A convergence of leaders

THE PARTNERSHIP entered into recently by MH Lhullier and Co with Smart Communications signaled a convergence of leaders in their respective fields. The contract signing was held at the Marriott Hotel in Cebu last Dec. 20, 2003. Michael Lhullier, president of MH Lhullier and Co, states that his company plans to develop operations for nearly every corner of the country. And to fuel this business growth, Lhullier chose Smart to be its crucial telecommunications partner. The partnership heralds another first in that the innovative Smart E-Load feature is incorporated into the lines Lhullier will be using in every phase of its expansion.

Adap presents Alzheimer's Disease forum

THE ALZHEIMER'S Disease Association of the Philippines (Adap), a non-stock, non-profit organization was founded in March 2000 by dedicated volunteer doctors, health care professionals together with family caregivers of Alzheimer's Disease patients (it is a full member of the Alzheimer's Disease International). The organization believes in education and research as key strategies in its campaign to combat Alzheimer's Disease and other types of Dementia. In its educational campaign, it deemed necessary to formulate a compendium of information that addresses the issues on prevention, diagnosis and management of Alzheimer's Disease that is comprehensive, up-to-date, evidence based and culture sensitive. For its 4th anniversary celebration, Adap will present to the public its "Recommendation in the Diagnosis, Prevention and Treatment of Alzheimer's Disease". An open forum with their panel of experts as reactors follows each presentation of the mentioned topics. It will be held on March 12, 7 a.m. to 12 noon at the Pan Pacific Hotel, M. Adriatico corner Gen. Malvar Sts., Malate, Manila. For more information, visit www.alzphilippines.com or e-mail at adapt@alzphilippines.com.

CPM qualifying exams passers



THREE Filipino marketing executives have passed the qualifying examinations for Certified Professional Marketers (CPM) given last September 2003, it was announced by the education headquarters of the Asia Pacific Marketing Federation based in Singapore. The successful examinees, all members of the 50-year old Philippine Marketing Association are Ma. Mita Angela Dimalanta, Aniceto Fontanilla and Edwin Mapanao. Dimalanta is director of D&G Pacific and an MBA graduate of UP. Fontanilla is the president of the Asia Pacific Centre for Research, an MBA graduate of Ateneo de Manila University, and is the executive vice president of the Philippine Marketing Association (PMA). Mapanao is the marketing director of Sarimanok Feeds Co (Thunderbird) and holds a BS degree in Fisheries and an MBA from UP-Iloilo.



VICTORIAS



INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND TO BID

Victorias Milling Company, Inc., Victorias City, Negros Occidental, announces that it will conduct a re-bidding for the design, installation and commissioning of two (2) units WET GAS SCRUBBER TYPE AIR POLLUTION CONTROL EQUIPMENT (APCE). It wishes to invite interested corporations, local or foreign to pre-qualify and to bid for this project.

Interested bidders should submit the following pre-qualification documents:

1. SEC/DTI Registration
2. Articles of Incorporation
3. Latest Business License/Permit
4. Audited Financial Statements (attach ITR) for the last 2 years
5. Sworn Certification showing that the supplier's or his principal's company has a paid-up capitalization of at least P50 million
6. An original copy of certification authenticated by the Philippine Embassy that the local supplier is the authorized representative of his foreign principal
7. Certification from the end-user/vendee that the supplier or his principal had designed, installed and commissioned a wet gas scrubber type APCE for bagasse-fired boiler with flue gas volumetric rate of at least 3,000 actual cubic meters per minute. The certification should show the capacity of the bagasse-fired boiler, volumetric flow rate of flue gas, particulate content before and after the wet gas scrubber, separation efficiency of the wet gas scrubber, year built and commissioned and duly signed by the end-user/vendee. It should also include the contact person, fax and telephone number and e-mail address.

VMC will not accept a certification submitted for a track record or experience of an external consultant who is hired by the supplier. It must be clearly established that the supplier's or the principal's company and not the external consultant hired, has the full experience of designing, installing, and commissioning the wet gas scrubber type APCE.

8. Certification of compliance with the government standards on particulate content of source emission.

Deadline of submission of documents will be on March 19, 2004. Only bidders who are able to meet the pre-qualification requirements will be notified to attend the pre-bidding technical conference, the date and venue of which will be announced later. The technical parameters and terms of reference for the design of the wet gas scrubber type APCE will be given during the pre-bidding technical conference.

The bidding date will be announced thereafter. Sealed bids shall be accompanied by a bidder's bond equivalent to five percent (5%) of the bid price in the form of cashier's/manager's check payable to Victorias Milling Company, Inc.

For further inquiries, please contact Messrs. Carlos S. Quintanilla, Dan C. Labrador or Ramon P. Pun-an at VMC Millsite at telephone numbers (034) 399-3696 to 97, (034) 399-3699 or (local) 2309, and Mr. Ping Abad at VMC Makati Procurement Office at telephone numbers (02)890-5256 and (02)890-7062. For technical inquiries, please contact Messrs. Roy C. Hautea, Arnel J. Amparo and Remegio S. Soriano at tel. Nos. (034) 399-3389 and (034) 399-2708.

Victorias Milling Company, Inc., reserves the right to reject any or all bids without offering any reason, to waive any required formality therein, and to make an award to the bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the Company. The Company assumes no obligation to compensate or indemnify the bidder/s for any expense or loss that they may incur in the preparation of the bids, nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

(Sgd.) TERESITA V. ILAGAN
Chairperson, Senior Bidding Committee

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Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS
 BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
 For Locally Funded Projects

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

(Re-advertisement)

The Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC), through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) for Locally Funded Projects and Procurement of Supplies, Equipment and Services, invites Consultants categorized as local experts to apply for eligibility to bid for the Contract for the Pre-Feasibility Study and Master Plan for Zamboanga International Airport Development Project. The Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) is Four Million Four Hundred Sixty Five Thousand Pesos (P4,465,000.00).

Prospective Consultants should be registered under any umbrella organization of consultants recognized by the Government with expertise on transportation and had undertaken projects similar to the project proposed for bidding within the last three (3) years.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Bond, Performance Bond, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification of the highest rated calculated bid and award of contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities are listed, as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Eligibility Forms	March 08, 16-2004
2. Submission of Eligibility Requirements	Until March 18, 2004
3. Results of Eligibility (Pick-up)	March 31-April 05, 2004
4. Issuance of bid documents	April 05-08, 2004
5. Pre-bidding conference	April 15, 2004
6. Submission & Opening of Bids	April 27, 2004

The Eligibility Screening Forms and Bid Tender Documents will be available at Unit 55, The Columbia Tower Bldg., Ortigas Avenue, Mandaluyong City, upon submission of a Letter of Intent, and payment of a non-refundable amount of P500.00 to the DOTC Cashier.

The DOTC reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive minor defects and accept the offer most advantageous to the Government. It assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

(Sgd.) DOMINGO A. REYES, JR.
 Assistant Secretary for Finance and Comptrollership
 & Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee (BAC)

(PDI - March 2 & 9, 2004)

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
 REGION I, San Juan, La Union

NOTICE OF SALE THROUGH MARKET DETERMINED PRICING (SMDP)

SMDP Bulletin No. 2004-B-02

The National Food Authority Regional Office I, San Juan, La Union invites all interested NFA licensed grain businessmen to participate in the Sale Through Market Determined Pricing (SMDP) 8,981 bags local RMO, 4,369 bags VCER22 and 47,702 bags IECR22 more or less, stored at the different warehouses in the provinces of Ilocos Sur, La Union and Western Pangasinan.

PROVINCE	WAREHOUSE LOCATION	RMO	VCER22	IECR22
Ilocos Sur	Bantay GID, Bantay, ILS	480	3,648	6,982
	Tan Whse, Cabugao, ILS	5,897	199	3,856
	Narvacan Whse, Narvacan, ILS	2,168	—	7,451
	Tagudin, PLGC, Tagudin, ILS	488	240	2,985
	Sengson Whse., Candion, ILS	—	282	4,534
	Obar Whse., Balaon, LUN	—	—	19,695
La Union	Alaminos Whse, Alaminos, Pang.	—	—	1,998
Western Pangasinan		—	—	—
TOTAL		8,981	4,369	47,702

The indicative price for RMO and VCER 22 is set at P12.15 per kilogram and P11.35 per kilogram for IECR 22.

Sale shall be for the whole lot, ex-warehouse, "as-is, where-is" basis. Offerors shall be required to post a bid bond in the form of either cash, manager's or cashier's check payable to NFA equivalent to the following:

CLASSIFICATION	CAPITALIZATION	BID BOND
Small and Medium GB's	Up to P100,000.00	5% of bid amount
Big	More than P100,000.00	10% of bid amount

Interested parties should submit the following documents to the Regional Bids and Awards Committee (RBAC):

1. Authenticated photo copy of NFA license/registration
2. Duly notarized authorization from the owner/charman certifying that the representative is presently connected with the company as an official/employees and is authorized to represent the company in the SMDP and other activities pertinent therein.
3. Certification from the concerned Registration and Licensing Office where the participant is registered as to the capitalization bracket (Small - P20,000.00, Medium - P20,001.00 to P100,000.00 and Big - more than P100,000.00).

The SMDP will be conducted at the NFA Conference Room, Second Floor, NFA Regional Office, San Juan, La Union on the following schedule:

Activities	Date	Time
Issuance of Invitation to Bid	March 1-3, 2004	8:00 AM to 5:00 PM
Tender Forms	March 4, 2004	8:00 AM - 9:00 AM
Pre-Sale Conference	March 4, 2004	10:00 AM
SMDP Proper	March 4, 2004	Immediately after Pre-Sale Conference or at the time the Committee declares

The SMDP Terms and Conditions and Tender Forms can be secured from the RBAC Secretariat at the venue specified above after paying a non-refundable fee of P300.00 per participant.

Further details and inquiries may be addressed to the Operations Section with telephone numbers (072) 242-5907, 242-5909 and 700-2579.

The Committee reserves the right to reject any or all offers, to waive any defects or informalities found therein and accept only such offers which in its judgment are most reasonable and advantageous to the NFA. The decision of the Committee as confirmed by the undersigned shall be final.

(Sgd.) DANILO L. BONABON

(PDI - February 29 & March 2, 2004)

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
 National Capital Region
 U.N. Avenue, Manila

INVITATION TO REGISTER AND TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID FOR BARGING AND CARGO HANDLING SERVICES FOR NFA-NCR

The National Food Authority, National Capital Region, U.N. Avenue, Pasig, Manila invites all interested qualified Barging and Cargo Handling Services Contractors to register, apply for eligibility and to bid for the provision of Barging and Cargo Handling Services (Vessel-to-Truck Delivery) in the discharging of 157,000 MT. more or less, of NFA imported rice at the South/North Harbor, Port of Manila, with an Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) of Pnp58,090,000.00.

Application forms and list of requirements for registration may be secured from the RBAC Secretariat upon submission of a letter of intent and after payment of a non-refundable/non-transferable registration fee of P2,000.00.

Only applicants with Certificate of Official Registration as NFA Barging and Cargo Handling Services Contractors issued by NFA-NCR RBAC may apply for eligibility and to bid for NCR Barging and Cargo Handling Services.

The schedule of bidding activities are as follows:

	DATE	TIME
1. Issuance of Application for Registration/Requirements	February 20, 2004 to March 3, 2004	8:00 AM-5:00 PM
2. Deadline for Submission of Registration Requirements	March 3, 2004	5:00 PM
3. Issuance of Certificate of Official Registration	February 23, 2004 to March 4, 2004	
4. Issuance of Application for Eligibility/Requirements	February 23, 2004 to March 5, 2004	8:00 AM-5:00 PM
5. Pre-Bidding Conference	March 8, 2004	10:00 AM
6. Bidding Proper	March 18, 2004	9:00 AM

The Application Forms/requirements for eligibility and to bid may be obtained from the RBAC Secretariat after payment of a non-transferable/non-refundable bidding fee in the amount of P5,000.00.

Other inquiries may be addressed to the Office of the Assistant Regional Director, NFA-NCR, UN Avenue, Pasig, Manila with telephone numbers 563-94-37 and 564-20-71 to 74 local 111.

THE NFA RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS THEREOF, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITIES OR DEFECTS FOUND THEREIN, OR TO ACCEPT SUCH BIDS OR AWARD TO ANY CONTRACTOR WHOSE BID IS CONSIDERED MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NFA OR TO THE GOVERNMENT.

(Sgd.) ATTY. BASILIDES TACO
 Assistant Regional Director
 Chairman, Bidding Committee

(PDI-February 20 & March 2, 2004)

Honda cars Pasig launches Honda Cares

ORPHANS of the Jesus Loves the Little Children Foundation felt the real meaning of Christmas when Honda Cars Pasig conducted the Honda Cares Outreach Program recently at Dreamscape in Robinson's Galleria, Pasig.

Photo shows the children in the game Funny Bone, with Mr. Marvin Panilan (host) and Shenda Dy (left) of Honda Cars Pasig Customer Relations. Twenty-two children received gifts from 11 host families who are all Honda customers. Each family got to spend time with two orphans as they participated in different games and activities. The kids chatted away as they talked about themselves over hearty snacks with their host families; sharing in-



teresting stories about one another. Aside from the gifts and snacks, the ride-all-you-can tickets at Dreamscape sent the children to cloud 9.

Together with partners Pilipinas Shell, Wintersnow (3M- Scotchint and OE Racing) SAVI & Tuff Kote, Keylargo, and Nippon Paint, the successful program is envisioned to be an annual outreach activity of Honda Cars pasig.

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OBITUARIES

 Message
of Thanks

We, the family of the late

BENSON TAM FOO

Died on February 24, 2004

wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to all those who condoled with us, sent flowers and messages of sympathy, gave donations, attended the memorial services and interment, and in so many ways gave us peace and comfort. Most of all, thank you for the prayers...

Thank You!!!

"I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies, and whoever believes in Me will never die."
 John 11:25-26

MINDA SURBAN REGLOS

Died in the Grace of our Lord
 on February 27, 2004 at the age of 61.

She is survived by her spouse, Rodolfo; children, Grace and Carlito, Ronaldo and Rodolfo Jr.; grandchild, Alexander; mother, Severa; brothers and sisters, in-laws, nephews and nieces, relatives and friends.

Her body lies in state at Loyola Memorial Chapels, Inc.,
 Guadalupe, Makati City.

Interment will take place on Wednesday, March 3, 2004
 at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque after the 10:30 a.m. Mass
 at the Manila Memorial Chapel.

 ATTY. BENJAMIN
SEBASTIAN SANTOS

First Death Anniversary
 (April 6, 1937 - March 2, 2003)

His loving wife ROSE PAA SANTOS, brothers
 and sisters: BELEN, ARMANDO, VIRGILIO,
 OSCAR, FLORINDA, NORMA and ROMY.

Masses will be offered at:

St. Agustin Church, Intramuros, Manila	6:30 a.m.
Immaculate Conception Church, Hagonoy, Bulacan	6:30 a.m.
Sto. Niño Church, Tondo, Manila	6:30 a.m.
St. Joseph Church, Aguilar, Pangasinan	6:30 a.m.
Baguio Cathedral	6:30 a.m.
Sta. Catalina Church, Baguio City	6:30 a.m.
St. Lourdes Cathedral, Baguio City	6:30 a.m.

 FRIEDRICH
MOZART E. GARCIA

Peacefully joined our Lord
 on February 29, 2004 at the age of 85.

His loving wife Rosario A. Garcia; children Cynthia & Kitz, Edith, Joy & Norman; and grandson Clarence; brothers and sisters Ferdinand, N. Rubens, Eden and Celia and other relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at La Funeraria Paz, G. Araneta
 Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Thursday, March 4, 2004
 at 10:00 a.m. at Eternal Gardens Memorial Park,
 Caloocan City.

 JOSE MARIA
ARCENAS CARIÑO

of Biñan, Laguna; Roxas City;
 United San Pedro Subd. and Ayala Alabang Village

Jong, as he was fondly called by Tatay Larry, Mommy Bing-Bing, Kuya J.P. and Ate Christy, Lolo Laur (†), Nanay Ledy, Ate Mimi, Tito Arun, Kuya Jay (†), Tita Itche Monette, Tito Arthur, Tita Eileen, Tito Edwin, Tita Malu, Tito Bubuy, Anita and Monina, Cessy, Tony and Moch, Anthony, Jay and Marie and Dom. His relatives and friends of Batch of 2002, Southridge High School graduates, University of Sto. Tomas Architecture 2-4.

Jong is at St. Jerome Church, Alabang. Cremation at
 Eternal Crematory, Biñan, Laguna to be announced later.

 JOSE MARIA
ARCENAS CARIÑO

of Biñan, Laguna; Roxas City; United San Pedro Subd.
 and Ayala Alabang Village

Jong, as he was fondly called by Tatay Larry, Mommy Bing-Bing, Kuya J.P. and Ate Christy, Lolo Tedy (†) and Lola Tellie, Jon and Nonie, Tom (†) and Chelo (†), Lyn and Roger, Dick and Cecille, Bong and Hannah, Greg and Joan, Pertie and John, Sochie, Tinton & Elaine, Baby & Lia, Cosette & Bingo, Doroy (†) and Stella, Deme, Nana & John & Rafael, Joan & Richard & Rij, Ticot & Jong, Kenneth & Karen & Christian, Iris & Andre & JR & Sharon, Daisylyn & Dan-dan, Angelo & Rexie & Ria & Beewee, Hanie & Justin, JL & Margot, Trisha & Teo & Tilos & Tate & Travis, Joao & Mica & Jobeem & Pia & Nadine, Carmela & Baby Girl.

Jong is at St. Jerome Church, Alabang. Cremation at Eternal
 Crematory, Biñan, Laguna to be announced later.

**"For God so loved the world, that He gave
 His only begotten Son, that whoever
 believes in Him shall not perish
 but have everlasting life."** John 3:16



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BUSINESS

2 listed firms move to prevent delisting

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

BELEAGUERED listed firms Prime Orion Phils. Inc. and Zeus Holdings Inc. committed to raise funds and cover their capital deficiencies to avoid the delisting of their shares by the Philippine Stock Exchange.

Prime Orion, formerly Guoco Holdings Inc., said it will cover its deficiency by bringing in a strategic investor to subsidiary Lepanto Ceramics Inc. (LCI) and restructuring roughly P1 billion of its outstanding bank loans.

Zeus Holdings, on the other hand, pledged to cover its P920,000 capital deficiency by absorbing a real estate asset worth P6 million.

Zeus Holdings also plans to shift its focus from investment holding to real estate. It said it was looking at several pieces of property for potential development.

The two companies were required to submit their business plans as PSE rules provide that listed firms with a negative stockholder's equity will be removed from the PSE's roster of

listed firms.

Popi proposed that part of the loans be converted to equity to reduce its debt load. Loan negotiations with creditor banks are ongoing and Popi hopes to hammer out a deal over the next few months.

The loan restructuring program also calls for dacion en pago arrangement wherein assets will be used to pay off the loans.

Popi expects to reduce its debt load to P1.25 billion once the loan restructuring program is completed.

Popi is also in talks with a potential strategic investor who plans to bring in funds to revive LCI's operations. In return, LCI will issue new shares equivalent to the capital infusion plus secondary shares.

Popi traced its financial woes to the financial crisis in 1997 which led to the downfall of many of its businesses.

Prior to the crisis, Popi was among the leading holding companies in the region with interests in property, manufacturing and the financial services sector.

January deficit swells 15.5% to P16.1B on higher spending

By Michelle V. Remo

THE COUNTRY'S budget deficit swelled by 15.5 percent in January this year to P16.12 billion from P13.95 billion in the same period last year, the Department of Finance said yesterday.

The widening gap between income and expenses raised doubts that the government would be able to rein in spending ahead of the elections in May.

The DoF said in a statement that expenditure rose in January because of increased lending to government-owned and controlled corporations as well as higher interest payments.

The government spent P69.25 billion in January, 7 percent more than the January 2003 level of P64.69 billion.

DOF Secretary Juanita Amatong, however, said in a statement that the government was on its way to meeting its budget deficit ceiling for the year of P197.8 billion.

"We will stick to our fiscal deficit target of 4.2 percent of GDP (gross domestic product) or approximately P197.8 billion for 2004," said Amatong.

The government estimates that it will have a balanced budget by 2009, which means that the government will have enough revenue to meet its expenses.

The DOF said revenue in January increased by 4.7 percent to P53.15 billion, largely due to the increase in collections by the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

The BIR collected P36.54 billion in January, 6.9 percent more than its collection during the same month in 2003.

The Bureau of Customs, on the other hand, exceeded its P8.5-billion collection target for January by 12.6 percent. Its receipts worth P9.5 billion, however, was slightly lower than the P9.616 billion recorded during the same month last year.

Borrowings for the month reached P16.3 billion, most of which came from the local market.

Officials have said that the Philippines, the largest debt issuer in Asia outside Japan, needs to raise \$1.85 billion in foreign financing this year to fund its budget deficit.

This year will be the 10th year in 14 that the budget has been in the red. The government kept the deficit within plan in 2003 after shocking investors in 2002 by blowing through three targets. *With a report from Reuters.*

PCCI SURVEY

1 of 4 businessmen cheats on tax payments

By Ronnel W. Domingo

ONE out of four businessmen says companies need to cheat on their tax payments to survive.

This was one of the major findings of a recent survey that the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry conducted among its members.

PCCI said that respondents listed the following top reasons for poor tax compliance:

- need to cheat to survive or to compete (25 percent of respondents); insufficient penalties imposed on violators (23 percent); lack of awareness on issuance and regulations (20 percent); the government's failure to apprehend offenders (17 percent) and the willful intent to not comply (15 percent).

"Consequently, (65 percent of the respondents said) poor compliance translates to in-

creased cost, such as tax consultant's fees, record-keeping expenses, and seminar costs," the PCCI said.

The PCCI estimates that these added costs represent between 5 percent and 10 percent of taxes paid.

The PCCI said yesterday the survey results showed increasing dissatisfaction over the country's tax system and poor compliance among its members.

The PCCI survey showed that 56 percent of its members found it difficult to comply with tax requirements in 2003, an increase from 48 percent in the previous year.

The same survey found that only 13 percent of PCCI members found it easy to meet tax requirements.

The group said there were 83 respondents, 75 percent of which were representatives of

large corporations.

A fifth of the respondents came from partnerships while the remaining 3 percent were single proprietors.

"The survey cited specific areas of difficulty in tax compliance such as tax audit, request for tax credit/refund, filing of tax return, request for (a ruling from the Bureau of Internal Revenue), advocating change and applying for tax relief," the PCCI said.

The survey also identified the following areas of convenience in the tax requirements and procedures: securing of tax identification number, tax remittance and registration of receipts and invoices.

The group said its tax committee conducts an annual survey among PCCI members to serve as a feedback mechanism for its advocacy efforts.

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Editor Cesar D. Mangawang

REALESTATE

WITH THE MIDDLEMAN OUT

Build your own condo for 45% less

By Tessa R. Salazar

THE SHORTEST and cheapest way of owning a condominium is still a straight line between two points: you and the architect. Owning a condo at direct cost—wherein you or your group hire an architect and build a condominium at its actual direct price in a build-to-own (BTO) scheme—is becoming a more financially viable alternative.

The BTO scheme lets buyers own residential units at direct cost by hiring the services of a team of technical professionals—architects, engineers, contractors—instead of purchasing mere end-products from the middleman.

This system revolves around an architect who hires a contractor directly for the client.

A group of architects, engineers and project development consultants of G&W, for instance, practices the BTO scheme that they say eliminates the middleman and the added costs for excessive profits, various overheads, executives' salaries, excessive loan requirements and debt servicing fees.

As a result, the price of condominium units can be brought down by as much as 45 percent from current mar-

ket prices, making housing (at least for condominiums) more affordable.

Debt-free

Unlike other condo projects mortgaged to a bank, the BTO project is debt-free, as unit owners are protected through a trustee bank that manages the release of funds for the project.

What's more, each day of delay in construction means a certain amount of money is paid back to the unit owner.

The trustee bank works by "regulating" the cash flow to builders. Instead of paying a single corporation to develop your condominium, all your funds for that project is kept in a trustee bank with specific instructions by the account owner that funds would only be released for the account owner's project alone. The bank would only release payments based on the construction progress made.

The bank only starts payments when it has been verified that the architect and contractor involved have actually started building on your property. This ensures that account owners' funds are actually being used for construction, as opposed to entrusting your money in a corporation and there are no assurances that your money is actually being used specifically for the project.

The BTO scheme includes the industry-standard time constraints on the part of the contractor. Such constraints require contractors to pay back to the client a certain amount for

each day of delay.

Class A affordable housing

This system has actually been applied to the Penhurst Parkplace Condominium—a project of Fort Bonifacio Development Corp. and G&W Development Consultants. The condo is located near the Manila Golf Course and is 10 minutes away from the planned Ayala Land Multimodal Project.

Penhurst's construction started in October 2002 and is targeted for completion in May this year, exactly 20 months later. It took three months to complete ownership of the 110 units in the 23-story building. All of the Penhurst unit owners hired G&W architects.

G&W specifically focused on making Penhurst Parkplace as a Class A affordable housing at a prime location for the middle sector, and cutting the middleman costs and profits during the entire development.

Gibson Austin O. Yu, BTO-business development head of G&W explains that this system allows condo unit buyers to purchase directly from the people who build condominiums—a system much like buying clothes directly from the manufacturers and the factories instead of going to the department stores.

Industry warranties

In the BTO system, Yu reiterates construction industry warranties apply even after the unit is turned over to the

Middleman-led conventional method

- Overpriced, debt-ridden, heavy overhead
- Construction funds are raised through mortgage of subject land.
- Buyers own nothing until completion and release of mortgage.
- Buyers' payments are easily diverted to other ongoing projects or unrelated purposes.
- Less mortgage value
- Rental negative: Rental income is usually insufficient to cover monthly amortization.

buyer. "These warranties get passed on to the client. Unlike when you buy from developers, everything stops when your unit is turned over to you."

Yu says that as a result of this system, the savings incurred in the Fort Bonifacio area project runs at about 40 percent. He quickly added that the 40 percent savings is applicable in the Fort Bonifacio area, and the savings depends on the area the project is being built on.

"You get comparative savings by comparing our price with the other projects that are preselling," he says.

Not just limited to the A class, Yu says the BTO system would work across the board.

"You can apply this system at low cost housing as much as you can apply it to very high-end projects."

G&W is currently forming another group of owners on its second project, Kensington Place, also in Fort Bonifacio. Construction starts in July this year and ends in June 2006. Here, a 65-sq-m two-bedroom unit, for instance, is pegged at just P3.1 million.

The BTO system has been largely modeled after the Singaporean system. "The Singaporean government hires architects and contractors to build condominiums and sell them to people at direct cost. The government doesn't act as 'developer' because it doesn't profit from the projects," explains Yu.

Yu predicts condominiums as the "homes of the future."



ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ



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Belgian circuit makes Pinoy adrenaline levels shoot up

By Tessa R. Salazar

DESMET, a Belgian group that implements designs of race kart circuits around the world, created something at the Speedzone kart racing circuit at The Fort in Makati. And like the famous Belgian chocolate, the circuit is a deliciously sweet but exhilarating ride.

Speedzone was originally situated in Cainta. Regardless of the location in the country, karting enthusiasts can now get a taste of a Belgian-designed karting circuit, the design of which has become one of the karting world's most popular racing concepts.

Indoor setup

The Desmet group of companies' owners Belgians Hans Desmet and brother Peter said

Speedzone's design is based on an indoor setup even if the actual track is not indoor.

Speedzone is completely owned by the brothers. Hans said he wants to maintain the quality, maintenance and management of the karting circuit in the Philippines. Thus, he wants to be "100 percent hands-on" in managing Speedzone.

Desmet has spent over \$1 million in Speedzone—from the

time it was first set up in Cainta to its transfer to The Fort.

The reason for the transfer, Desmet discloses, was proximity for its actual markets. Most of Speedzone's individual customers, it turned out, were from exclusive villages in Forbes Park, Dasmariñas, and Urdaneta in Makati, and the corporate entities who conducted corporate events with Speedzone—comprising up to 60 percent of the circuit's business—had most of their addresses in the Makati area.

Speedzone in Cainta started operations on Nov. 15, 2002. After closing a year later, the circuit was transplanted to The Fort. Although Speedzone has yet to announce a definite grand launch date, customers have been flocking regularly. An average of 100 tickets daily are being sold.

The Speedzone at The Fort has leased a total area of 8,200 square meters for the circuit, including parking space for up to 40 cars within the Speedzone fence and another 85 cars outside of it.

For 12 minutes (or one heat) it can accommodate 20 drivers. For first timers, the track can accommodate only 10 drivers. It currently has 25 adult karts and four kiddie karts.

The property has a full capacity of 1,200 heads.

Training ground

Speedzone is now used by recreational and competitive karters. The Tuason Racing School recently chose the circuit to train children and adults. Champion female karter Michelle Bumgarner also trains here.

Competitive karters usually move on and excel in full-size car and formula racing.

The track length of The Fort's Speedzone is 750 meters, slightly

shorter than the Cainta Speedzone, which ran 820 meters.

The basic considerations in constructing the track involved safety and environmental concerns. Desmet maintains American standards for environmental soundness.

"If I ran the whole track fully operational with all my karts, I create less pollution than one jeepney running the whole day," Hans told the INQUIRER.

Each kart used is fitted with a catalytic converter.

The asphalt, which is locally mixed, follows certain Desmet specifications based on safety. Combined with international standard tires, the karts get the maximum grip on the circuit.

"Speedzone has low tire consumption, yet the karts cannot flip over," he said. "This asphalt's consistency is of very fine grain. It has a special top layer for good grip yet minimal tire consumption."

The dividers are made of special plastics made in England that can absorb high-impact collisions.

Timing system

The digital timing system is made in Belgium. Speedzone uses the same timing system used in 90 percent of all the rental race-tracks worldwide.

For now, a single digital timing system can be found in the middle of Speedzone's track. Several timing systems will be set up once Speedzone becomes fully operational.

Speedzone's restaurant-bar, which is still being built, will feature three plasma TV screens that will announce races and drivers' lap times. The restaurant-bar will have a terrace and a viewing deck on top.

An audio-visual meeting room



THE NEW Speedzone is now accessible to patronizers of Forbes Park, Dasmariñas, and office-based karters in Makati.

PHOTOS BY RUDY ESPERAS



DIVIDERS are made of special plastics made in England designed to absorb high-impact karting collisions.



FOR 12 MINUTES (or one heat) it can accommodate 20 drivers running simultaneously. It currently has 25 adult karts and four kiddie karts.

Teamwork, organization make condo top-off ahead of schedule

ONE Legazpi Park (OLP), Ayala Land Inc.'s high-rise condominium project, has been topped-off last Feb. 14, which is another milestone in the construction progress of the building. This bodes well for future residents of the much-anticipated urban residence, conveniently located virtually steps away from Makati City's business district and malls.

With the topping off, most structural works have already been completed so that efforts will now be diverted to begin finishing on to its completion and turnover by the first quarter of 2006.

Punchlisting

Says engineer Ruel Bautista, assistant vice president of Ayala Land's Residential Buildings Group: "Unit handover starts when our contractor does their own punchlisting work. Then our project manager does his own list. After that, our marketing and sales people do their own punchlisting as well. If they say it's okay, that's the only time the unit is deemed ready for inspection and punchlisting by the buyers."

Within the last quarter of 2005, unit owners will be invited in batches should there be any rectification requests as need be, which, according to Bautista, is a service not being offered by some competitors.

Such attention to detail takes approximately two months for all four rounds of double-checking. This close scrutiny to visual perfection and safety precautions is integral to the job, and works within a reasonable time frame, shares Bautista: "We are

realistic. When we say we commit to start by this date, and complete by this date, that is something that the project team focuses to achieve."

Ahead of schedule

The first quarter of 2004 sees the One Legazpi Park project even slightly ahead of schedule. The concrete perimeter walls and the window wall system, or the "skin" of the building, will soon reach completion. "For typical structural floors, I think we are very competitive in terms of speed of construction. For example, we complete a typical structural floor in about six to seven days," says Bautista.

Engineer Michael Milaor, project director of OLP, adds: "By the second quarter of the year, half of the building will be sealed off so that the finishing works at the lower levels—the 25th floor and down—will be in full blast." Dry finishing works like setting up of gypsum walls and ceilings, installation of wood flooring, bedroom closets, kitchen cabinets and the like will commence.

Accolades

Since One Legazpi Park began initial construction in December 2001, it has received accolades, according to Milaor. "OLP was awarded 'Model of Safety and Quality' by Makati City officials which appeared on maverick MMDA commissioner Bayani Fernando's weekly television program MMDA on the Road last March 2003. It was also honored with the "One Million Safe Man Hours" award in October 2003, given by the EEI Corp., the

general contractor," Milaor says.

He adds that credit must be given to the teamwork and initiative of both the Residential Buildings Group and the project team to make the project cohesive and proceeding like clockwork. This, he says, makes the entire process ultimately beneficial for the unit buyers: "Because of the open-line communication among the project team, problems are discussed and addressed immediately."

OLP project development manager and senior division manager from the Residential Buildings Group, Kate Ilagan, also shares that this has resulted in many decisive investors, as the condo units have become much sought-after: "People will see the actual progress of the building as its delivery date draws near. Some competitor products that launched at the same time or even ahead of One Legazpi Park are still far from getting beyond the ground floor."

"If you invested there, you might be regretting it now for passing up on One Legazpi Park. True to our word, we're going to deliver on schedule, and as promised. This is really value for money," she enthuses.

One Legazpi Park will be conducting a top-off ceremony on March 8, from 1:30 to 3 p.m. at the project site, to be attended by Ayala Land's management officials and several invited guests. For inquiries about the event and One Legazpi Park, please call 848-5000. You may also e-mail ayala-sales@ayala-land.com.ph or log on to www.ayala-land.com.ph. Model units are available for viewing behind Filipinas Heritage Library on Makati Avenue, Makati City.



HOME STRETCH RAFFLE PROMO WINNER

Joselyn Abubo, right, is the fourth lucky winner of the Robinsons Department Store's just concluded Home Stretch raffle promo. With her at the brand-new house and lot she won at the South Square Village in General Trias, Cavite, are her mother and brother-in-law. The RDS Home Stretch raffle promo is supported by Robinsons Homes Inc. and Citibank. In previous draws, RDS has given away three house-and-lot packages to Nancy Gongon of Bulacan, Renah Tulio of Iloilo and Nelia Ito of Cavite.

Construction arbitration seminar

THE CONSTRUCTION Industry Arbitration Commission and the Philippine Institute of Construction Arbitrators (Pica) will hold an orientation seminar on construction arbitration on March 19 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The seminar venue is the CIAC conference room, 4th floor, Jupiter 1 Bldg., Jupiter St., Bel-Air Village, Makati City.

The seminar fee is P1,200 inclusive of morning and afternoon snacks, lunch, handouts and certificates of attendance with a 10-percent "early bird" discount for registration made before March 12.

CIAC is the government body vested with original and exclusive jurisdiction to arbitrate disputes arising from or connected with private or government construction contracts.

Pica is the organization of construction arbitrators, accredited by CIAC, whose members include engineers, architects, construction managers and lawyers with wide experience and training in arbitrating construction disputes.

For inquiries, call up the Pica secretariat at 811-6671 or fax at 813-2578.

Worldbex 2004 strengthens local construction industry

WORLD BEX Services International—top organizer of prime events in the country—is bent on giving the local construction business a big push forward.

WSI is the driving force behind eight successful runs of the World Building and Construction Exposition (Worldbex). Now on its ninth show, topping Worldbex's list of goals for this year is to bolster the local construction industry, says Joseph Ang, founding chair of WSI.

"One of our main objectives for this event is to strengthen the local construction industry in the Philippines and serve as a catalyst for local businessmen to forge global ties with big names in the industry, renew business partnerships, and link with major industry players," Ang adds.

The construction business

The country's need for housing projects, roads and bridges, commercial edifice and other infras-

tructure rises by the year to meet the needs of a growing population. Each year there are millions of housing needs in the country including housing backlogs and new housing projects.

The implementation of major infrastructure projects such as the Light Rail Transit II and the Mass Rail Transit construction remains on high gear to fill the growing need of accessibility and convenience for the public. All these trigger greater demands for

building and construction materials and services. "The Philippines' construction industry is undoubtedly a growing business," says Ang.

Best time

Keeping faith in the great potentials of the Philippine construction sector, Ang believes it is the best time for the World Building and Construction Exposition. Worldbex 2004 gathers global market leaders and major indus-

try players in a comprehensive exhibition of building and construction products, technology and services.

"With a generally positive review on the country's domestic economy, the good showing of the agriculture sector and the economic programs being pushed by the government definitely helped the Philippine economy gain the momentum," Ang explains. "All these augur well for the building and construction in-

dustry."

Worldbex is scheduled on March 16-20 at the World Trade Center and adjoining Philippine Trade Training Center in Pasay City. With a bigger exhibition space of 8,000 square meters.

Worldbex is now accepting exhibitors. Interested parties may call WSI at 531-6374 and 531-6350 or e-mail at info@worldbex.com. For additional information, log on to www.worldbex.com.

REAL ESTATE



Why it's good to renovate during summer

By Alexis A. Acacio, Ph.D.

IT IS again summertime and the home building industry is again very busy. I have received a lot of e-mail inquiring about renovating their house during summer. It is generally advantageous to renovate during summer so you may now extend the garage, add a room, redo the landscaping or construct the gazebo that you have always wanted.

Maybe it's the weather, or maybe it's school vacation. Here are some reasons a renovation is feasible during summer:

BUILDING DREAMS

• **The Weather Advantage**—Good, sunny weather means that work can be completed fast since there are no rains that cause delay. Construction site productivity is usually high during summer. Also, the workers you would employ cannot blame the weather for any delays that may happen.

Also, summer is the best time to paint the house with a new color. Doing a paint job during the rainy months may cause you future problems since paint may not dry completely. Once this happens, water stains or bubbles form within the painted surface. So my advice is to have your house painted now.

• **The Vacation Advantage**—It is really difficult to have an ongoing renovation work during the regular school days since the children need a comfortable place to stay and study. During summer, the children are not in school so the renovation job would not really affect them at all.

For parents, vacation time for the children means that they have some extra time to de-

It is really difficult to have an ongoing renovation work during the regular school days since the children need a comfortable place to stay and study

vote to renovation work.

• **The Experience Advantage**—If the renovation work is very minor like painting the room and fixing the garage, and you feel that your children can do it by themselves, then it can serve as a great learning experience for them. Be careful though in handling paint since it can easily start a fire.

Doing minor renovation work can give your older children hands-on experience in:

—**Supervision and Management.** No matter how small the job is, they can learn to be responsible and be able to supervise a job. They also learn how to deal with workers.

—**Purchasing.** They can purchase materials and eventually learn to negotiate and haggle for the best price.

—**Quality Control.** They learn how to see an acceptable work and one that needs to be redone.

If the renovation work becomes large, remember that it may require the services of an experienced and competent design professional.

Disadvantages. Having some renovation work may mean that you may have to give up that long planned vacation since you would want to supervise the work yourself. Getting good quality construction personnel during summer is also difficult since most of them are tied up with current jobs.

Work Safely. If you are doing renovation work yourself, repairing the electrical work or climbing to the rooftop should be avoided

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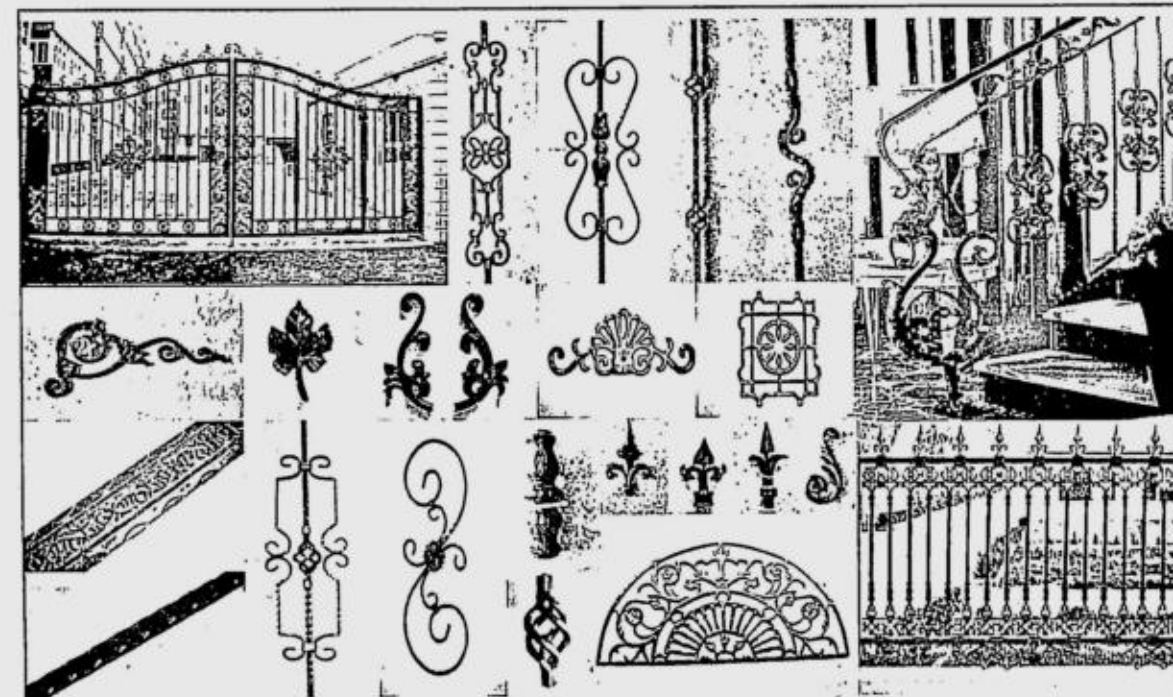
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since it is unsafe to do. Never put yourself at risk and always ask for the services of a competent professional for difficult work that needs special skills.

Final Note. At last, it is summertime and most of us will spend time in our homes. If you think that the renovation job is very minor and you can do it yourself, then go ahead and do it. Otherwise, you must seek the help of a design and construction professional of your choice.

E-mail the author at aaacacio@pacific.net.ph.

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Globe Asiatique offers high-end lifestyle at affordable rates

Valenzuela City, a fast-growing and soon to be a prime location for residential properties, is the site of Globe Asiatique Realty Holdings, Inc. newest project — Chateau Valenzuela. The condo-village project is located at P. Gregorio St., Brgy. Linguanan, Valenzuela City and features the luxury and full amenities of condominium living at the most affordable prices.

Delfin Lee, President of Globe Asiatique, assures Chateau's future residents the best in urban living. "One feature that sets Chateau Valenzuela apart from the other housing projects in the area is the site development and the mood and ambience that the project exudes. The perception of people towards Valenzuela will never be the same after the Chateau has been completed. But more than that, our buyers will surely marvel at the first-class amenities and facilities we have provided for such a low price," Lee confides.

Globe Asiatique is offering a unique financing scheme starting with a "no down payment equity". Qualified Pag-IBIG members may borrow up to P500,000, of which the difference from the actual selling price shall be paid to Globe Asiatique over a maximum period of 18 months, depending on the buyer or on the of construction of the units.

To illustrate, Mr. Lee explains, "For a P650,000 unit, P500,000 shall be covered by your loan with Pag-IBIG with a term of 25 years at 10% interest. The remaining P150,000 equity shall be paid by the buyer at no interest to Globe Asiatique. Even then, we cut the amount of equity to be paid to 50%, in effect making the buyer pay initially only P75,000 over a maximum period of 18 months or as soon as the units have been delivered to them. The remaining P75,000 of the equity shall be paid for the next two years, simultaneously with their 25-year term loan with Pag-IBIG. There is no lump sum payment.

The Mediterranean-inspired project consists of 18 six-storey buildings, with 84 units per building. All the units shall be delivered to the buyers fully finished and completely ready for occupancy. Starting from its imposing gate, Chateau Valenzuela boasts of wide landscape avenues, a clubhouse, basketball court, mini playground, a swimming pool with cabana type gazebos, and function rooms for your special gatherings. Each building will also have its own perfectly landscape areas, completing the tranquil and relaxing character of the village.

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REAL ESTATE

DTI assures developers to check rising cost of cement, steel

By Charles E. Buban

WITH CONSTRUCTION activities expected to peak up this summer, developers are wondering how to go about it amid increasing prices of cement and other building materials.

"This is a big challenge for us so we expect the support of several government agencies," said Subdivision and Housing Developers Association chair Jesus Atencio.

In reaction, the Department of Trade and Industry assured SHDA that they are currently meeting with various key cement producers and suppliers to carry out immediate measures to encourage them to bring down the price of cement.

"I am fully supportive of the efforts and advocacies of SHDA to bring down cost of cement to ensure production of affordable and decent housing," said DTI Secretary Cesar Purisima during a meeting with the developers.

Proposals' submission

The secretary also enjoined SHDA to submit proposals and mechanisms to en-

hance competitive and reasonable prices of cement adding that there is also a need to look into other countries' experiences and specific policies and programs regarding this matter.

Purisima said his department and the National Price Monitoring Council are now acting to check cement prices which has now jumped to P140 per bag.

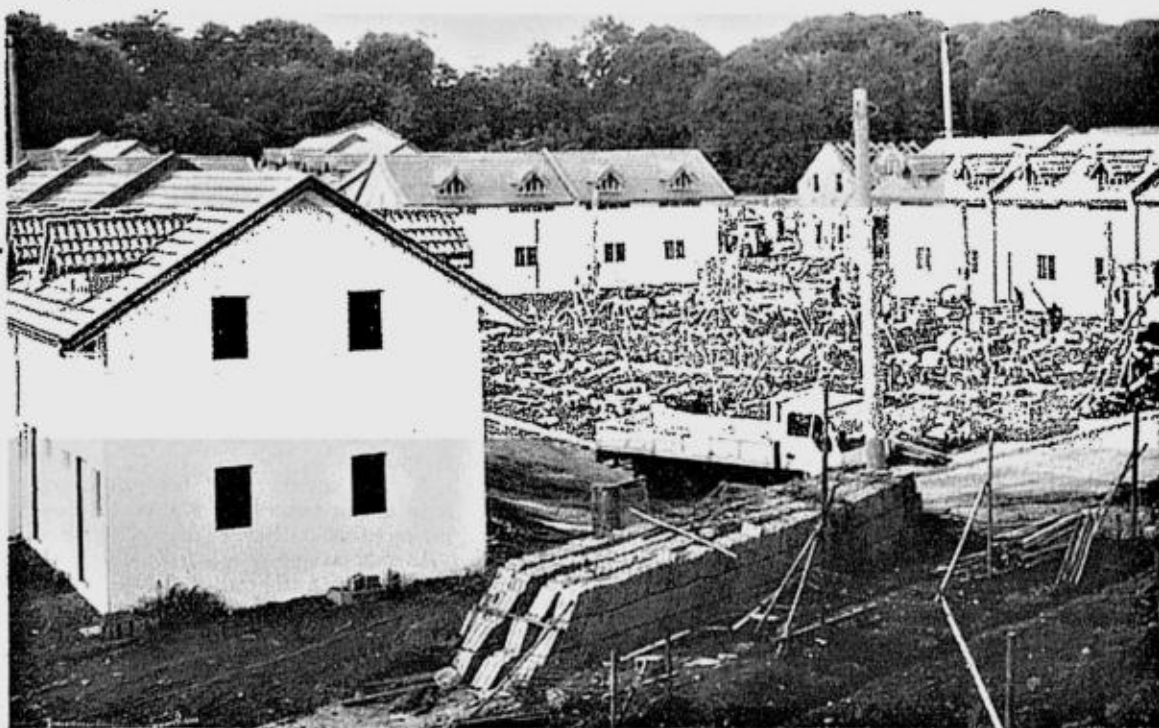
The price of the 40-kg bag last December was just P120.

SHDA recently complained about this "irregular and spiraling cost and dwindling supply of cement."

Addressing current situation

"It is important for both the government and the private sector to join hands to immediately address the current situation after all the housing industry is one of the performing sectors of the economy that is viewed as both means of social intervention and catalyst for economic development," explained SHDA VP Roy Calleja.

SHDA national president Marilu Alferez said the association sees no justifiable reason for the increase in cement price when inflation levels have remained stable throughout the year and the cement indus-



BECAUSE of the construction materials' rising cost, developers are worried they won't be able to deliver their projects on time.

Prices of GI sheets and steel bars also went up

try's production capacities are still under 50 percent.

Prices of GI sheets, steel

Apart from cement, prices of G.I. sheets and steel bars also went up.

The DTI noted that because the components of G.I. sheets and steel bars are imported, their price reacts quickly to changes in the peso-dollar exchange.

The price of steel bars has risen early this year to \$23 (P1,296) from \$12 (P676) last December while a 10-mm steel is now pegged at P96.50 from last December's P85.50.

On the other hand, a 12-mm steel bar now costs P136.35 from December's price of P123.

The price of a gauge 26 (40 mm) is also up by P2 from P154, while the cost of gauge 31 (20 mm) went up from last December's P128 to P136.

Teleperformance USA eyes Manila contact center office expansion

TELEPERFORMANCE USA today announced a major expansion of its contact center facilities in Manila. The company is one of America's leading contact center companies and is part of the SR Teleperformance Group, a \$1 billion global organization ranked by Customer Inter@ction Solutions magazine as the No. 1 international provider of outsourced teleservices.

One thousand seats of production capacity will be added to Teleperformance's existing customer contact center located in Pasig City. To accommodate this expansion, a further 75,000 square feet of building space across five floors has been leased, and construction is already un-

derway. Apart from hosting additional production capacity, the expanded facility will include areas dedicated to training, quality assurance and technology as well as staff cafeteria.

The expansion of Teleperformance's facility is expected to create an estimated 2,500 new jobs, and recruitment is already underway. The new employees are expected to provide world-class customer service on behalf of a number of Fortune 1,000 companies. Aside from drawing upon its pool of local managers and supervisors, Teleperformance will also be relocating several key management and technical staff from the US.

Said Dominic Dato, CEO of Teleperformance USA: "Teleperformance USA continues to enjoy success in winning major outsourcing programs. This success is based on providing the highest standards of service. We are confident that the expansion of the Philippines operation will help achieve this objective and play a significant part in the continued growth of the business."

Teleperformance USA is a leading provider of outsourced customer relationship management services for Fortune 500 companies. It operates more than 4,000 workstations from 23 contact centers across the US and from multiple offshore locations in Argentina, Canada, Philippines and India. The company is a subsidiary of Paris-based SR Teleperformance.

How to start, manage successful realty office

TO LEARN more on real estate as a profession and be properly guided in setting up a realty brokerage company, Urban Institute of Real Estate will conduct a seminar on "How to Start and Manage a Successful Realty Office" on March 20, from 1:30 to 6 p.m. at the AIM Conference Center, Benavides corner Trasiera Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City.

Topics included are real estate brokerage, terminologies, definition of real estate professionals, qualifications and licensing requirements, penalties for illegal practice, duties of a professional to his clients, sources and how to secure property to sell, documents such as authority to sell, requirements to be entitled to commission, how to safeguard your commission and how to start and close a transaction.

Other topics are subjects covered in the licensing examination, how to do real estate networking, real estate associations, franchising, business operations, sales organizational structures, sales personnel recruitment techniques, training programs, advancement and career path programs, commission structures, awards and other incentives.

For more details, call 681-0928 or 0916-4269174 or e-mail urbanet@pacific.net.ph.



WALKING the scented floral path to balance and well-being are Andrew Gotianun Jr., Fr. Anscar Chupungco, OSB, Joji Gotianun Yap, Joseph Yap and Michael Gotianun.

Timberland Heights takes root

DEDICATION rites honoring nature and wellness marked the installation of the gateway of Timberland Heights, the newest project of Filinvest Land Inc.

Participating in the solemn rites were Filinvest Land executives Andrew Gotianun Jr., Joji Gotianun Yap, Joseph Yap, Michael Gotianun, Mercedes Gotianun, San Beda College rector and president Fr. Anscar Chupungco and representatives of the Vincentian Brothers.

Spectacular views of nature

Timberland Heights is an environment-friendly, master-planned community that has open spaces with spectacular views of nature conducive to an active lifestyle. A 15-minute drive from the Batasan Pambansa in Quezon City, its proposed components are the Mandala Residential Farm Estate, the Greenways, Nature and Learning Center, Showcase Farm, San Beda Medical Center and a commercial hub.

The Timberland Sports and Nature Club, expected to be launched in the first quarter of next year, will also be provided to the residents of Timberland Heights. There are also land provisions for socio-civic amenities such as churches, a town center, a police and fire station as well as a post office.

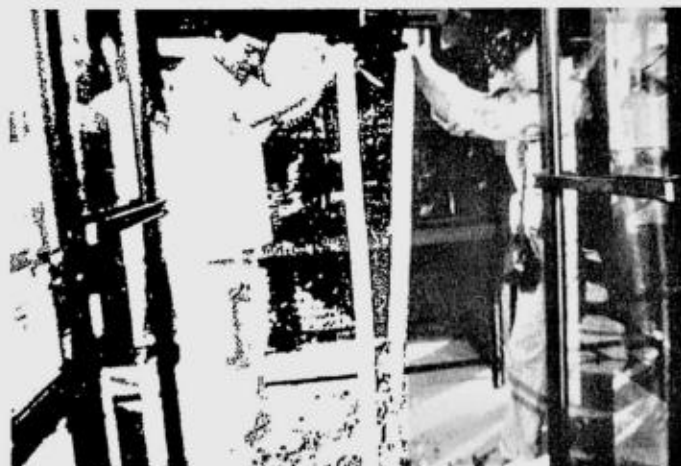
Environmental awareness

Of the 677 hectares, 80 hectares will be devoted to the Greenways, a 24-km nature trail that may be traversed on foot, bike lanes and bridle paths that will wind through scenic meadowlands and river crossings.

Proposed to be built is a Nature and Learning Center, which aims to expose visitors to environmental awareness. Campsites, fishing ponds, natural waterfalls, swim holes, botanical gardens, bird-watching decks, canopy walks, and a rock-faced cliff enhance the ecological personality of the area.

Estate lots for farming

Within the Timberland Heights community is the Mandala Residential Farm Estate, which will



BREAKING the bamboo for prosperity is Filinvest's Andrew Gotianun Jr. and Joji Gotianun Yap.

Timberland Heights is an environment friendly, master-planned community that has open spaces

provide estate lots for hobby farming. Among its amenities are a swimming pool, picnic grounds, ornamental gardens and view decks.

Services include a showcase farm, a Kumbasari produce market, farm depot and an agro forestry center established jointly with the College of Forestry and Natural Resources at the University of the Philippines, Los Baños, with a training center and learning laboratory. Several nurseries will dot the Timberland Heights property to supply the reforestation of the Greenways.

To provide medical assistance to the community, the San Beda Medical Center will be established along with a medical school and church while the Vincentian Brothers will set up an elementary and high school.

Symbolic rites

During the rites, FLI officers greeted guests amid the chirping sound of birds. They were led to the entrance of the site where they lit a torch, lighting the gateway to symbolize the ushering in of a new lifestyle.

The guests all walked down a scented floral path, signifying balance and well being, and crossed a bamboo bridge before reaching the Visitors' Center which was later blessed and inaugurated by Fr. Chupungco. Guests were then shown the scale models of the project. After the blessing, a bamboo filled with coins was split in half and thrown to the crowd to symbolize prosperity.

To cap the dedication rites, FLI executives and guests washed their hands in a basin filled with water and white rose petals to signify their pure intentions.

Breakfast was served thereafter. The dining area was set up near the viewing deck for everyone to enjoy the view of the sun-kissed misty mountains, lush green trees and grassy hillsides. Guests were given seedlings grown in the on-site nursery as a gift token.



VIEW of the visitor's center, vegetable beds and majestic mountainside in Timberland Heights, a 677-hectare environment-friendly community in San Mateo, Rizal.

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The ABC of vitamins

I HAVE received several queries from readers on the best time to take vitamins and which vitamins interact with each other. This type of information is relatively easy to get from the Internet, but many people don't have the time to surf the web. As a favor to those readers, I have compiled a convenient guide for them.

Mind you, this is just going to be tips on the best time to take multivitamins and common supplements like calcium and about what vitamins and minerals interact with what. This is not going to be about the best kind of vitamins to take and whether one type is better than another because there isn't enough space.

Vitamins and minerals 101

In an ideal world, we would get all the vitamins and minerals we need the way God intended and that's through the food we eat. But with today's busy lifestyles and overly processed food, most health experts now say that taking a vitamin-mineral supplement is "cheap" insur-

WELL AND
GOOD

Tina Juan



ance to meet the barest minimum of our needs. But always keep in mind that food is the superior source and a supplement will not repair the ill effects of a bad diet.

THE ABC/D3

The best time to take nutritional supplements is when it is most convenient for you

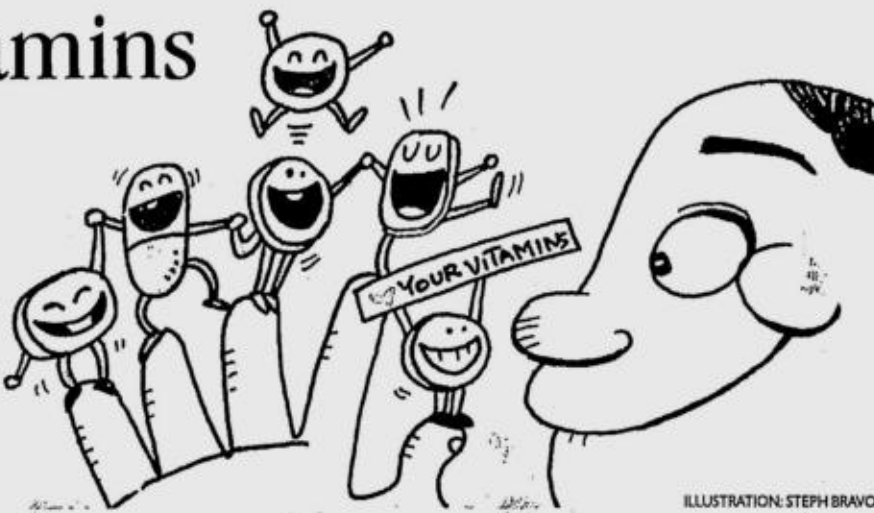


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What's in that
glass of water?

Water is essential for life. And in a way, Filipinos are very lucky. According to Dr. Peter H. Gleick of the Pacific Institute for Environment (PIE), "The Philippines happens to have 323 cubic kilometers (km³) per year of total renewable freshwater supply," which means we are one of the three most bountiful countries in Southeast Asia as far as water is concerned.

But then again, of that amount, we can only withdraw a total of 29.5 percent yearly. This is the reason why only about 60 percent of our total population have access to clean, drinking water.

And to make matters worse, much of our water sources have been contaminated.

For example, there were confirmed reports that after the Americans left their bases in Clark and Subic, they also left a deadly trail of toxic materials in the water sources surrounding Pampanga, Tarlac, and Olongapo. A WHO Mission Report revealed heavy metals, oil and petroleum lubricants, aldrin, dieldrin, DDT, PCBs, lead, mercury, arsenic, asbestos in dangerous levels around the three areas.

In Baguio City, the city's water district abandoned a dam supplying water for domestic use due to pesticide contamination from gardening activities.

Now, if you think it's only one province, try multiplying that same pesticide problem by the number of provinces that rely heavily on agricultural chemicals.

And while you're at it, add the other major sources of water pollution in the country: industrial ponds, mining impoundments, municipal landfills, and the million gallons of wastewater that we discharge from our homes every year.

Can you imagine now what's in that glass of water you're holding?

Anyway, it's easy to brush aside these facts and say that the government is doing something, like applying chlorine in our water to remove all its impurities.

Okay, let's talk about that universal chlorine. Yes, our local water district applies chlorine into our water to control bacteria. Unfortunately, scientists recently found out that ingestion of chlorine in water is one of the root causes of cancer, hardening arteries, heart attacks, and strokes. Joseph M. Price, M.D., an attending physician at Saginaw General Hospital in Michigan, states, "Chlorine is the greatestcrippler and killer of modern time."

Dr. Herbert Schwartz of Cumberland County College in Vineland, New Jersey adds, "Putting chlorine in water is like starting a time bomb. Cancer, heart trouble, and physical aging conditions are attributable to chlorine-treated water supplies. It is making us grow old before our time by producing symptoms of aging, such as hardening of the arteries." Dr. Miern Bier, Research Biophysicist at Veterans Hospital in Tucson, Arizona, says that in his studies, "chlorine was given in very diluted solutions to dogs. The dogs' immunity reactions were so interrupted it caused a rejection of kidney transplants. The chlorine problem is very similar to that of air pollution. Chlorine is an oxidizing agent very much like the poisonous nitrogen oxides we have in the air."

Experts from around the world are now one in saying that water polluted by toxic substances "can and do cause miscarriage, cancer, skin disorders, kidney problems, respiratory and stomach problems, and still-births."

For his part, Director Rory Villaluna of the Philippine Center for Water and Sanitation (PCWS), says, "The reasons behind these statistics are obvious. Water resources nationwide are inadequately protected, conserved, and rehabilitated. PCWS has proposed a code of conduct that encourages improvements and the safeguarding of water resources by users, especially communities."

Villaluna adds, "Reeducating the citizenry on the conservation, protection and rehabilitation of water sources is a must."

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SPARKLERS. Monica Olbes, Nicole Fandino, Maribel Calma, Wynn Wynn O., Mons Tantoco and Maricris Olbes



YOUNG JEWELS. Jill Kierulf, Wynn Wynn Ong, Tessa Prieto-Valdes, Firma's Ricky Toledo, Tina Pamintuan and Amanda Griffin

Bling-blings by Wynn Wynn: The more, the merrier



THE GANG OF THREE. Choy and Marissa Cojuangco with Le Lagdameo



GAL PALS. Lani Ablaza, Bernie Jaspela and Stephanie Ong



RAJO Laurel



COTILLION choreographer Rebecca Morales-Pagsibigan



MILLETTE and Lito Suarez making their grand entrance into the ballroom to start the evening's festivities.

THE FAB launch of the brilliant, Wynn Wynn Ong's Naga 2004 Jewelry Collection, "Glitterati," at the chi-chi Firma Greenbelt 3 was a smashing success.

Hosted by Firma's partners, Southern gents Chito Vijandre and Ricky Toledo, it started as a by-invitation-only cocktail party, *palangas*, but turned into near-pandemonium at one point, as Manille's chic women elbowed their way to snatch their favored pieces. The smarter ones were there an hour early just to buy or reserve items before the mob arrived. And who can blame them? After all, this was the talented Burmese designer's best collection to date.

The extraordinary pieces, organic in form and inspired by nature, were the accumulation of eight months of intensive work.

The "most" stunning piece was a collar with 650 carats of shimmering high-grade Brazilian aquamarine briolettes that cascaded in increasing intensity of color. It sold faster than you could bat an eyelash, *palangas*. A sculptural layered gold cuff named "Bpund" looked fabulous on the radiant beauty Kitty Jacinto.

A limited men's line of jewelry was added this year in response to loads of requests from male friends like brilliant architect and interior designer Ed Calma, as well as from female clients, who wanted them as gifts for their men.

All the one-of-a-kind cufflinks were completely sold out that night. Hot name-droppable women of style, like Lucy Torres Gomez, Maricris Zobel and Carol Garcia, reserved the best ones ahead of time, as did designer Rajo Laurel, *palangas*.

One more won't hurt

Many confirmed Naga fans arrived wearing their previously acquired pieces and left wearing new ones, *naturellement*. Leica Carpo could not resist a pair of dangling earrings and a branch-shaped pearl and citrine brooch, while her cousin, the traffic stopper Tessa Prieto-Valdes, found the perfect brooch in fish shape. El Cirkulo's super asset Malu Gamboa walked away with a big smile and a pair of delicate garnet earrings.

Marissa Echaz Cojuangco tried on a few of her favorite pieces, which husband Choy Cojuangco promised to get for her. Marietta Cuyegkeng, an avid collector of Wynn Wynn's pieces, had her eye on two collars and a turquoise-and-pearl cuff.

Linette Raymond came with her husband, mega Southern businessman Pom, who was admiring the hand-sculpted layered disc pendant hung from a gold collar that looked great on her. Nancy Padilla had decided on a pair of earrings, while Sandy Poblador could not decide between a sparkling cuff and a necklace so she got both!

Siuping Par and China Lim Go picked some gorgeous pieces. *Thes* chic Josephine Knox in a pink Armani top managed to go home with the very necklace Wynn was wearing that evening!

Rachy Cuna walked in with a bouquet for the designer and left wearing a stunning Naga ring. The necklace that was printed on the invi-

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH



Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen on Kodak Max



GOING LOCAL. Ricky Punzalan, Marivic Vasquez, Don Escudero and Jomari Treñas



SELINA de Venecia, Elaine Kintanar, lady of the hour Wynn Wynn O. and Marian Nuguid



POM and Linette Raymond with Lee Del Pan



MILLETTE with her two precious children, Tracy and Nikki

tation went to Citibank's woman of substance and style Nina Aguas, already the owner of some of Wynn Wynn's most beautiful pieces. Jeannie Goulbourn of Silk Cocoon asked Wynn Wynn if she "wanted to do a show in Paris together."

Stylish expat women Greta Zeitune, Julia Holz, Julie Pitney, Mehbooba Khan and members of the diplomatic corps nibbled on finger food and sipped the champagne specially prepared by Bambi Sy Gobio of Luscious.

Fashionable name-droppables, like Menchu Soriano; Rosanna Fores; Monica Olbes; Amalie and Sharon Azanza; Weng and Greg Domingo; Ginna Montinola; adorable Evelyn Lim Forbes; Elaine Kintanar; Marian Nuguid; Ines Delgado of Itsie Bitsie; Lulu and Kingson Sian; Nicole and Noye Fandino; Vanna Virata; Monina Lopez; Reret Bonoan; Tessa Celdran, and Baby and Coco Anne, came, saw, bought and left with a gorgeous piece of artwork/jewelry in hand, *palangas*.

Well, *palangas*, scoot over to Firma, Greenbelt 3 in Makati and check out some of the Naga jewelry by Wynn Wynn Ong. Hey, I'll bet you'll grab one, too.

Gold rush

Millette R. Suarez wanted a quiet birthday celebration like all her celebrations in the past except there was something special about this year. It was her golden year, *palangas*.

Thankful to Him "up there" for all the bountiful blessings she has received for the past 50 years—a good husband, two beautiful children, a good, rewarding job at the World Bank, a new house, plus super pals—she said, "Let's do it with a big bang!"

And a bang it was, as she got together her kids based in parts of the USA and the Philippines, her relatives and her gang from her high school days at St. Mary's College in Quezon City and college days at the College of the Holy Spirit.

D-day was at Martin's Garden with a sit-down dinner, an open-bar and endless ballroom dancing, *palangas*.

Millette was definitely a glamour "golden girl" in her yellow gown done by Pasig-based Milla Santiago-de Leon. She later changed into a fully beaded gold-and-black halter top for the program. Helping out GG entertain the invitees was her California-based sister, Imelda R. Lones, who looked wow in a signature black-and-blue gown.

Introduced during the affair was the contingent from Manille, led by Gener Gozum, Leddie Cruz and Chito and Neny Regino. A short program emceed by Louella Mil followed. Climax of the program was a dance medley choreographed by Rebecca Pagsibigan with close pals led by "Doc" Perfecto Santiago and his wife, Purita, plus Millette's *famille* as cotillion dancers.

When Millette made her grand entrance into the ballroom escorted by mega-businessman husband Lito Suarez, they were given a standing ovation. Soon after the birthday girl blew her birthday candles on a beautiful fondant cake done by Ritchie Torrijos, followed with a "birthday bashing and roasting" started by her eldest brother, Florida-based Rommie.

Next came Nikki and Tracy giving homage to their mom, and lastly, husband Lito, who was introduced as the man who "footed the bill." After the short speeches there was all-night dancing.

Millette's "happiest birthday celebration" was definitely what she deserved, dahlings.



INVITEES include Gener Gozum, Leddie Cruz, Yvette Alisasis, Ritchie Torrijos, David Kim, Sunshine Chongco, Desiree Kim and Twickie Regino.



GRACE NOTES. Cotillion dancers Nanet Regino, Purita Santiago, Desiree Kim, Louella Mil, celebrator Millette S., choreographer Rebecca P., Tracy Suarez, Tess Taguas, Charito Hablero and Fellie Gomez

A ride to another dimension

THE FOLLOWING story may seem to be straight out of a science fiction movie. But what happened to me was real, not fiction.

I had just finished a meeting with the human resources officers of a well-established insurance company on the 11th floor of a Makati building recently. Ed, the employee relations officer, accompanied me to the elevator.

I saw a woman in a white dress sitting on a sofa to the far left of the elevators. There were, I think, four elevators. Ed pressed the down button. I saw the buttons of the elevator on the extreme right light up indicating it was going down.

I said goodbye to Ed and entered the elevator. Inside were three lean-looking men in gray overall, similar to what construction workers wear. They glanced at me as I entered. All of them were taller than the typical Filipino. They stood behind me, so I did not get a good look at their faces.

Up instead of down

When the elevator stopped, I glanced at the number of the floor. It was the 14th. I was surprised but said nothing. The three men got out. Left alone, I wondered why we were on the 14th floor when the elevator was on its way down.

I had not come up with an answer when the elevator stopped again, this time on the 11th floor. I said to myself, "This can't be!" When the elevator door opened, I checked if it was indeed the 11th floor, where I came from. I saw the same woman in white still seated on the sofa but sending text messages this time. The elevator door closed and brought me to the lobby.

I was somewhat puzzled by the incident and wondered if I just did not notice that the elevator went up instead of down. But I should have felt the elevator go up. Besides, I was dead sure the buttons outside the elevator indicated it was going down. No way I could have made that mistake. My host, Ed, would have pointed out to me

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licaucó



if the elevator was going up.

Strange goings-on

I have heard of strange and funny things going on inside elevators. There was the case of a group of women who went up in an elevator that opened in a non-existent floor with unfamiliar features. It was dark and looked like a warehouse. They immediately stepped back into the elevator.

No one could identify the floor they were brought to when they asked about it. When they checked the list of floors in the building, the place was nowhere to be found. The elevator did not stop again at that non-existent floor.

Could something like that have happened to me? Is there a way of finding out?

When I mentioned this strange incident to Helen, the new channel of Ang Suh, she thought of asking the wise spirit entity from the upper 5th dimension about it. I "met" Ang Suh in 1984 through automatic writing. The spirit was then channeled by someone who has now migrated to the United States.

Helen asked Ang Suh about my experience through automatic writing.

The answer was crystal clear: I was indeed transported momentarily to another dimension or plane of existence that co-existed with the physical plane and the three men were really ghosts, not living people!

Glimpsing another sphere

Here is Ang Suh's remarkable explanation of what really happened: "Oh, that experience gave JTL, the Golden One, a glimpse into another dimension or sphere. It was like being temporarily transported

to another plane, while he was in his physical body in your plane. All the different planes coexist, only you are not aware of them. Sometimes, you are given chances to see or be in another reality situation, so that you feel and experience all at the same time.

"Yes, those three men were dead people existing in another dimension already, but since the Akasha bears the records and they have imprints in the Akasha (ether), sometimes people can tap into their records.

"You will ask, how come it was the moment with JTL? Why the time frame and the people involved? JTL was in a state of suspended motion where, without him knowing it, he was in a different vibratory state affected by the electromagnetic field in the area that was filled with the strong electrical essence of the three. That was the time they died. They didn't die together but, at that point, they were being beckoned to the light and JTL's presence helped in healing, in finding the light.

"JTL doesn't know his powers and gifts. He was a dead walker in ancient Egypt and in different dimensions in between this dense plane and other galactic worlds, and so it was at that moment (of the elevator ride). All are connected, and the past, present and future are simultaneously occurring."

I met Ed again a week later and asked him if he saw the three men in the elevator. He said, "What three men? You were all alone in that elevator!"

No wonder the three men looked taller than most Filipinos. They were floating! Since I don't normally see ghosts, it didn't occur to me they were dead!

Address letters to this column to 308 Prince Plaza I, 106 Legaspi St., Greenbelt, Makati. Call 8107245 or 8926806. E-mail jlicauc@ed-samail.com.ph. Visit <http://jlicauc.co.tripod.com>. Listen to my dzMM radio program every Sunday, 6-8 p. m.

The ABC of vitamins

From page D1

Vitamins are either water-soluble or fat-soluble. The B-complex group and vitamin C are water-soluble and are not stored in the body for long. Under normal circumstances, any excess that you take will be eliminated through urine. However, extremely high doses may be toxic.

Vitamins A, D, E and K are fat-soluble and are stored in the fat tissues and in the liver. If taken in mega-doses, the vitamins can accumulate to dangerous levels.

Minerals are either macro or trace, which do not reflect their importance but only refer to the amounts needed by the body. Macro minerals like calcium are required in bigger doses while the body only needs small amounts of trace minerals like zinc.

A multivitamin usually contains an assortment of vitamins and minerals from A to Z in varying amounts depending on the formulation. Only so much can be packed into a tablet or capsule, which has to remain small enough to swallow. So vitamins like C and E and minerals like calcium, which are prescribed in larger amounts for some people, are available separately. For example, smokers need additional vitamin C daily, heavy drinkers need additional B-complex, pregnant women and women taking the "pill" need additional folic acid.

One of my readers asked how she could tell if her multivitamin was being dissolved in her body and not passed out intact. One way to find out is by dropping the tablet into a glass half-filled with water and the other half vinegar. The tablet should start dissolving in 30-40 minutes. If it's still intact after that time, that particular brand may not be dissolving properly in your stomach.

Best time is meal time

The basic rule is multivitamins or other vitamin and mineral supplements should be taken during or right after a meal for maximum absorption. The fat-soluble vitamins need to be taken with a meal that contains some fat. If you are taking a multivitamin, B-complex, C and E, you can take them all together after your biggest meal of the day.

If you are taking fiber supplements, don't take them together with your multivitamin. Fiber can bind with fat-soluble vitamins and minerals making them unavailable for your body.

Calcium

Your body cannot absorb more than 500 mg at a time so if you are taking 1,000 mg of calcium, take your pills at different times of the day. Some experts say nighttime is the best time to take your calcium.

Calcium interferes with the absorption of iron, so don't take your calcium supplement

with a multivitamin containing iron. Now what if your multivitamin contains both calcium and iron? Don't worry about it because the typically small amount of calcium in a multivitamin will not affect the absorption of the iron. It's only when you take calcium in larger amounts that it will overpower the iron in your multivitamin.

Calcium is best absorbed when you have an adequate amount of vitamin D in your body. You can produce your own source of vitamin D through sun exposure. But if you are sun-shy like many of us, make sure your multivitamin has vitamin D or you are eating food fortified with vitamin D (usually milk, cheese, cereals). Natural vitamin D is only available in small amounts in fatty fish like salmon, mackerel and sardines; egg yolk; and liver.

Iron

Most people don't need iron supplementation, but if you are among those who need it, take it separately from calcium. It is best taken on an empty stomach for quick absorption but it can cause stomach upset so doctors recommend taking it with your meal or a small snack.

Calcium is not the only substance that can interfere with iron absorption. Coffee and tea bind with iron and can make you absorb less of the mineral. Meanwhile, vitamin C makes you absorb iron better so take the mineral with your vitamin C supplement or with a glass of orange or calamansi juice.

Pre-natal vitamins

Even though they are called pre-natal vitamins, the best time to start taking these special preparations is before you get pregnant because their extra folic acid helps prevent birth defects, especially in the early stages of pregnancy when most women don't even know they are pregnant.

Most convenient time

When all is said and done, the best time to drink your vitamin is when it is most convenient for you. If you have a complicated routine for taking your supplements, you might end up not taking them more often than you take them. Most experts say you will still absorb more than you lose even if you take your supplements at the "wrong" time.

Choose the same time every day, whether morning or evening, so it becomes a habit. To help you remember better, place your supplements in a conspicuous place that you always look at so they are literally staring at you in the face. Many people keep their vitamins beside their bed or in the dining area.

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info

The launch of the Ricky Reyes
2004 AD Campaign

lolah....
ang ganda-ganda
divahh!



The Tanghalang Nicanor Abelardo
(Cultural Center of the Philippines)

March 2, 2004
6:00pm

LIFESTYLE

Discovering small wonders

If you are always on the lookout for the latest innovations to improve your general appearance and, ultimately, your outlook, here are some wonderful finds guaranteed to boost confidence and provide satisfaction.

Diamond peel. A sure-fire hit among the beauty-conscious, this new treatment is heaven sent. It is a non-invasive, painless way to exfoliate your skin without harming it in any way. Forget those old-fashioned facials. This one beats them all.

How it works: a diamond peel treatment machine is the most advanced in microdermabrasion or exfoliating. A small, diamond-tipped wand is lightly placed on the skin. As it is pulled up by suction, it sloughs away old, dead skin cells.

The combined polishing action of diamond chips and the cleaning action of vacuum re-

moves the topmost layer of the skin. The process results in softer, smoother skin. It also regenerates the skin.

Conditions that can be treated with diamond peel include: fine lines around the eyes, forehead, corners of lips due to aging; acne and cosmetic surgery scars; hyperpigmented/sun-damaged skin; age spots; blackheads/white heads; oily, enlarged and clogged pores.

Ideally, the procedure should be done three or twice each month.

Collagen mask. A non-toxic, vegetable-based soothing mask designed for deep hydration and moisturizing. Usually accompanying a diamond peel, it softens the skin without making it oily. It is mixed with cotic, a safe whitening ingredient, to even out the facial skin tone and give the face an unmistakable glow. Should be used twice weekly by those with dry or combination skin.

INSIDE OUT



Cory Quirino

Call Facial Care Center at 8161259.

Healthy drinking. Protein in the diet is needed to provide energy, lose weight and maintain muscular strength and stamina. One of the best-tasting and effective protein drinks in the market is Pure Whey. It is a complete snack drink high in amino acids and glutamine peptides, the basic tools for muscle growth. Also containing methionine and cysteine, it will help boost your immune system.

A drink like Pure Whey is ideal before and after workouts. Body builders and fitness enthusiasts know that a protein-rich drink is the best way to stay lean. Another plus factor for Pure Whey is its taste, which is similar to ice-cream shake minus the milk. The drink is low in fat and sugar.

Pure Whey is available in five flavors—strawberry, vanilla, chocolate, cocoa, mocha and banana.

Champion Nutrition products like muscle nitro, met-endurance, met-2 (for meal replacement and weight loss) are also available. Call 4104937 or 3730609.

Choco madness. Who said chocolates were only good for eating? Choco lovers should take their passion to relaxing levels. You can indulge in a 60-minute whipped-chocolate moisturizing experience while having a neck and scalp massage. A choco body polish will scrub the body clean. It is followed by a choco thermal cocoon/wrap. The non-edible choco wrap eliminates excess body fluids and makes the skin smoother while balancing the energies. Available

upon request. Call Fitness First Body Care at 8130761, 7710828, 7254592 or 4212220.

Aromatherapy. The healing benefits of aromatherapy are indisputable. Essential oils from lavender, bergamo, peppermint, orange, ylang-ylang, rose, etc. can help soothe frayed nerves and calm a restless mind.

While most are used in a standard aromatherapy bowl with candles, there is another and safer method. Special lamps that burn without flames can release essences into the air consistently and safely. Aromatherapy, 30 minutes two times a day, can alleviate asthma/respiratory problems, depression, arthritis, hypertension, etc. Call Bel-Air Lamps at 0920-2296938 or 0916-3615980.

Big wonder. But above all the many small wonders that will help improve your lifestyle, you should begin with one constant—the wonder of you. You make the person that you are. What you do with yourself can bring out the best or the worst. So enjoy, explore and celebrate yourself by discovering your many small wonders.

Love and light!

Watch my weekly television program, "The Cory Quirino Show", 11:30 p.m. every Wednesday on Studio 23. Listen to my live radio show "Ma-beauty Po Naman" 6-7 p.m. every Sunday on dzMM 630 Radyo Patrol.

E-mail the author at coryquirino_fy@yahoo.com

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Seated leg extension on stability ball



STRENGTHENS muscles in front of the thigh (quadriceps), as well as challenges the "core" muscles of the trunk.

Equipment:

Stability ball. As a substitute, you can use a chair or stool.

Exercise technique:

1. Sit on the ball with legs slightly apart. Hands can be on the hips or holding the ball for more balanced support.

2. Contract the muscles in front of your thigh to straighten your leg. Hold for one second then bend your knee.

3. Do the desired number of repetitions. Switch legs.

Performance tips:

1. To increase resistance, you can use ankle weights.

2. Avoid jerking when you straighten your leg. Always move with control.

3. If you have knee problems, check with your doctor first before doing this exercise. Although it strengthens the muscles, the exercise can irritate your knee joint if you have an existing knee problem.

Repetitions:

Do 10 to 15 repetitions.

Seminars mark women's month

THE BRAHMA Kumaris (BK) is holding free seminar-workshops and retreats on the role of women in fostering spiritual regeneration and revival of human values.

The series is held in observance of the United Nations International Women's Month this March.

On Thursdays, 6:30-8:30 p.m., at the BK Meditation Center, Makati City—March 4, Art of Creating a Still and Peaceful Mind; March 11, Art of Giving and Not Feeling Drained; March 18, Art of Observing and Not Absorbing; March 25, Art of Heart Maintenance.

On Saturday, March 13 or 20, 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Reclaiming My Inner Beauty (one day for women aged 20-34); Saturday, March 27, 9:30 a.m.-12 noon, Shakti, The Power that Empowers.

On Sunday, March 21, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Spiritual Arts for Women.

Brahma Kumaris Center for Spiritual Learning is in Tagaytay City.

Call 8907960 or e-mail bkmanila@info.com.ph for Makati program; and (046)4132128, 8602257, 0917-3563572, 0916-5250897 or e-mail bktagaytay@cavite.ph internet for Tagaytay program.

Take Charge Doc!

Nicky S. Montoya, M.D.



Looking to learn more about your benefits under your MEDICard coverage? Do you want to be clear on the procedures, which allow you to avail of MEDICard's services? Get your information straight from MEDICard's Medical Director, DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA.

FAQs (frequently asked questions)

I always hear the term "Summary of Benefits". What does this mean?

A "summary of benefits" or SOB is an outline description of covered services for members usually based on Terms of Reference (TOR) or final schedule of benefits desired by a corporate client. The SOB is the package reference used by our providers or administrators in administering your healthcare services. Members in general are provided a copy of this (Guidebook, Healthcare Primer, etc.) so that they may be aware of what benefits they are entitled to. Do remember, that the SOB is just a convenient summary. On the other hand, your healthcare service agreement has the complete details of your benefits, obligations, and rights under your plan.

Meet your MEDICard Team

At the De La Salle University Medical Center in Dasmariñas, Cavite, MEDICard members can avail of the services of Dr. Joseline A. Ferrolino. Doktora Ferrolino specializes in the field of Obstetrics and Gynecology where she has more than 23 years of clinical experience. She hails from the UP College of Medicine and took her residency training for her specialization at UP-Philippine General Hospital. She is married to ENT specialist Dr. Brendan Ferrolino with whom she has four children. Dr. Ferrolino is a Life Fellow to the Philippine Obstetrics and Gynecology Society and the Philippine Medical Association (Cavite Chapter). For your needed consultation services, visit her clinic at Room 2101 of the DLSU Medical Center, Mondays and Tuesdays from 10 AM to 12 noon.

Contract Signing



MANILA WATER COMPANY, INC. (MWCI) signed recently the renewal corporate healthcare agreement with MEDICard for the HMO coverage of its employees and their dependents. Sealing the partnership towards quality healthcare are (L-R) MWCI's Marinella Paz Ml Ina (Mngr., HRASD), Dr. Cristina Lachica (Mngr., Occupational Health & Med. Clinic), Ruel Maranan (Group Dir., HRCS) and MEDICard's Dr. Nicmar Montoya (Pres.), Marcel Torres (Sr. Mngr., Direct Sales), and Luis Montoya (EVP & GM).

We encourage all MEDICard members to voice out their concerns and issues at hand. BE HEARD AND BE READ. You can write DR. NICKY S. MONTOYA at 9/F Sagittarius Bldg. H.V. De la Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City or e-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com. For feedback on availment of our services, e-mail us at feedback@medicardphils.com.

For inquiries on individual or family membership, dial 818-2161. For group or corporate membership, dial 812-8360, 817-5136 or 817-4985 and look for a membership consultant. For Cebu Sales Office call (032) 253-5031; For Davao Sales Office call (082) 224-6931/305-3386.

TEXT MEDICARD: Key in MEDICARD and send to 2344 (Globe & Touch Mobile) or 4627 (Smart & Talk N' Text).

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: www.medicardphils.com.

MEDICard is the first HMO in the Philippines and the whole Asia Pacific Region to be ISO CERTIFIED



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1. Promo is open only to Imedeen Classic buyers (original or new packaging). Fill out the Business Reply Envelope (BRE) found in each pack.
2. Promo period is strictly from February 1 to March 31, 2004. All BREs should have post-office stamp inclusive of these dates only. The more BREs sent, the more chances of winning. If a name is drawn twice, only 1 prize — the bigger prize — will be given.
3. Deadline for mailing/sending entries is on March 31, 2004, midnight.
4. Draw date is on April 12, 2004 at the Ferrosan office in Makati.
5. Three grand prizes are at stake: FREE roundtrips and 3D/2N accommodations for two at Sun Village Resort ** in Boracay. Prizes not convertible to cash.
6. Consolation prizes include 14 gift certificates for beauty treatments and other products. Winners outside of Metro Manila will get the cash equivalent of the consolation prize only if there are no participating outlets in the area.
7. For more details, log on to www.HerWord.com

Available at Mercury Drug outlets and other leading drugstores.

**Winners will get a gift certificate from Sun Village Resort valid for 1 year upon receipt.

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